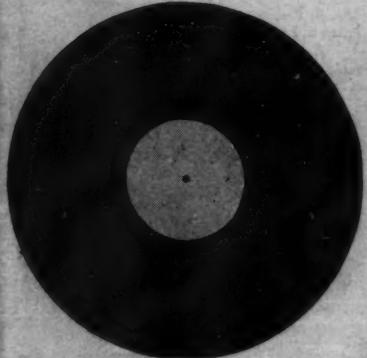


The American RECORD GUIDE



June, 1955
Volume 21, No. 10



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The American RECORD GUIDE

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June, 1955

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(see page 319)

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June, 1955

THREE GUIDES TO LP RECORDINGS



ORCHESTRAL MUSIC, by Irving Kolodin. 268 pages. Alfred A. Knopf, New York. \$3.50.

CHAMBER AND SOLO INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC, by Harold C. Schonberg. 289 pages. Alfred A. Knopf, New York. \$3.50.

VOCAL MUSIC, by Philip L. Miller. 381 pages. Alfred A. Knopf, New York. \$4.50.

▲AT LONG LAST, we have three books dealing with the LP literature, though by no means in its entirety. Mr. Schonberg, in his book, points out that "a spot check and some hasty calculations reveal that over a recent twelve-month period more records came out than there were hours in the year to listen to them." Each author has chosen the few among multiple performances that they believed worthy of discussion and among individual performances those deemed necessary. Each of the authors have reviewed or heard a goodly part of the LP literature with which they are concerned since LP's inception. That each must have endured countless hours in listening and relistening, there can be no question of a doubt.

Of the three books, Mr. Miller's survey of the vocal field is the largest. It is also the most cordial to its subject. This is understandable since he has devoted the major portion of his critical work to this field since joining the editorial staff of this periodical twenty years ago. Mr. Schonberg has specialized on keyboard music to some extent, and it is in this province that he accomplishes his best, though sometimes provocative, evaluations. In the field of instrumental or chamber music, his appraisals are both cogent and well-considered. He and Mr. Miller give one the feeling that they have

lived more intimately and companionably with recordings than Mr. Kolodin. The latter seems aloof at times to his subject, and even impatient with artists and performances that have had wide acceptance from equally qualified members of the critical faculty. There are strange contradictions as well as omissions in his book—omissions of performances that he previously praised highly in print. His book leaves much to be desired. In his Prefatory Note, he hurls against the spawn of LP an explosive charge that may well anger those who have no objectivity. For Mr. Kolodin is not one to soften his punches against artists or performances, or to conceal his dislikes.

In all three volumes, the authors have refrained from allowing high fidelity to influence them as a motive in recommendations, which is a laudable procedure. Mr. Schonberg's foreword includes some sensible comments on this subject. —P.H.R.

HIGH FIDELITY DEMONSTRATION DISCS

THIS IS HIGH FIDELITY. Vox DL-130, \$5.95.

▲SOMETHING novel and outstanding among the several fine demonstration records extant, this one offers a concentrated education in high fidelity, and is concerned with both the musical and technological aspects of the art of sound reproduction. For the first time terms—such as frequency range, resonance, distortion and balance—take on a musical meaning. Arthur Hannes, the "commentator," explains clearly and succinctly the various problems, and the projection of his agreeable voice has been equally well handled. The musical selections have been well chosen to give clear examples that the layman can understand. Side A is concerned with problems of Frequency Range and Distortion. These are demonstrations that provide unusual

educational values for every record buyer. Side B introduces the choirs of the symphony orchestra and is followed by the outline of the nature of musical sound. Informative demonstrations of acoustic problems bring this fine record to a close. The extensive and informative pamphlet is in keeping with the high standards of this rec.-d.-g project. Our congratulations to Vox, to Tyler Turner—author and producer, and all those connected with the making of this unusual record.

FURTHER STUDIES IN HIGH FIDELITY.

Capitol SAL 9027, \$6.75.

▲THIS is an impressive addition for your "demonstration" library, if demonstrate you must. It has percussion and bass galore, and also plenty of high frequencies. My preference is for Side 2, with its predominantly early 20th-century flavor with a bit of Brahms chamber music thrown in for—what proves to be—almost shocking contrast, not to mention the excerpt from Saint-Saëns' *Carnival of the Animals*. Side 1 suffers from the usual close microphoning used in "pops" recording and for me, at least, is not high fidelity. But who can say what is high fidelity? The extensive and competent notes are, as in the first set, by Charles Fowler. They are followed with a quasi-technical discussion of recording technique.

ECHOES OF HI FI.

Vox 10", UHF 1, \$4.75.

▲THIS is a good sampler of Vox hi-fi technique that amply demonstrates the aural excellence of their recordings. The nine bands on this disc make each selection a teaser being all too short, hence offering little possibility for musical enjoyment. Band 1 has test frequencies from 20 to 15,000 cps and may be used to obtain a rough approximation of the frequency range of your sound system (your ear included). The comprehensive notes of Robert Darrell provide a clear understanding of the problems of high fidelity reproduction and also of its "problem children"—those over zealous hi-fi enthusiasts.

—George F. Varkonyi

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Michel Richard de Lalande

Leading French Composer of Church Music of his Day

by Anson W. Peckham

IN AN AGE when Tartuffish characters, two-faced tufthunters or sycophants dominated the official and social life of the French government headquarters at Versailles, even more than they do today in other national capitols, the straight-laced, almost puritanical integrity and colorless nobility of a certain individual—who became a leading figure in that social swirl—was particularly noticeable. This was Michel-Richard De La Lande, or Lalande as most English dictionaries seem to prefer, superintendent of the King's music under Louis XIV and the leading French composer of sacred music in his time. This, despite the real ability of Lully's special rival, Marc Antoine Charpentier, who was unable to compete with either Lully or Lalande in royal favor.

Lalande (1657-1726) was born in Paris, the fifteenth child of a tailor. Possessed of an excellent soprano voice as a boy, he sang in the choir of St. Germain l'Auxerrois until his voice changed, the meanwhile pursuing his musical studies with Chaperon, the choirmaster. He learned to play several instruments during this period, but abandoned them later to concentrate upon the organ. This he did so successfully that he was appointed organist of a Paris church while still in his 'teens.

The Duke of Noailles engaged Lalande as his daughter's music-teacher, and was pleased with the results that he recommended the young man to Louis XIV. It is recorded that the good Duke was more impressed with the musician's sober mien and seriousness of purpose than he was with his musical potentialities. At

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any rate, the King confided to Lalande the musical education of his two legitimate daughters, the future Duchesses of Bourbon and Chartres, secure in the belief that though they might not learn a great deal about music, at least their morals were not likely to be corrupted.

In 1678, Lalande tried for one of the posts at the Chapel Royale but was judged too young, in spite of the friendship and backing of Lully, the most influential musical figure of the age. Five years later, however, he bested thirty-five contestants in an examination to win one of the four positions, and was then appointed superintendent of the King's music. Subsequently, he was knighted by Louis XIV.

In addition to much religious music of high calibre, Lalande produced a great number of ballets, divertissements and other occasional music to amuse the court, among which the *Sinfonies des Noel* and the *Sinfonies pour les soupers du Roi* are mentioned as being outstanding. The former, based on well-known Christmas themes, were played in the Royal Chapel on Christmas night. The *Sinfonies pour les soupers du Roi* were not symphonies as we use the word today, but rather extracts from secular works in the form of suites of dances, marches and vocal airs organized to entertain the royal party during supper. Each brief section is complete within itself, not dissimilar in style to the chamber music of Couperin, Le Grand.

The *Symphonies for the King's Supper* was revived in 1938 by the Société des

Concerts de Versailles, and was so well received that subsequently it was recorded by a chamber orchestra under the direction of Roger Désormière (Oiseau Lyre 78 rpm discs 141-42). The cheerful quality of Lalande's tunes is most refreshing, and the scoring for strings, oboes and trumpets is far more imaginative than one might expect from a composer born almost thirty years before Sebastian Bach.

Many savants credit Lalande with being the creator of the motet for chorus, soloists and orchestra. Certainly, he is the first Frenchman to have adopted the forms of concerted church music as practiced by the Italian school and to develop them to conform with the requirements of French tastes and sensibilities. Thus did Lalande establish his preeminence over his immediate rivals. He is said to have given "special attention to declamation and to the proper agreement between words and music," which is born out in his famous *De Profundis*.

A Modern Tribute

Alexander Cellier, the noted organist of the Temple de l'Etoile, who has made an exhaustive study of Lalande's music, says of him, "De La Lande speaks the musical language of his century more richly than Lully and with an eloquence and profundity of expression never before attempted by the French School." He points out "the admirable understanding of the text's meaning," the great diversity of means employed—choruses, vocal quartets, trios, duos, etc. The limited orchestral forces, which usually consisted of a body of strings with the addition of flutes and oboes (as in the case of the *De Profundis*), are used with great resourcefulness; the instrumental lines often being maneuvered quite independently of the voice parts, an uncommon practice in his time.

Lalande wrote a great many motets while he was in the King's employ, and after his death his widow and his favorite pupil, Collin de Blamont, collected and published forty of them. Cellier singles out a *Te Deum* and a *De Profundis* as the outstanding works of this series, and he himself prepared a realization of the

latter for modern performance, adding an organ part for use in church. The score, published by Rouart Lerolle, is readily available and is rapidly gaining favor with local church musicians.

The Recording

It was with a certain amount of misgivings that I approached the new (and first) LP recording of Lalande's *De Profundis* (Vox PL 9040, \$5.95), for it was noted that the instrumental and vocal forces employed in this very French score were German. It did not take long, however, to determine that the Teutonic influence in this case did no great harm to the spirit of the original, and in some ways aided its exposition by the discipline and orderliness which were brought to bear.

Furthermore, the Pro Musica Orchestra of Stuttgart, the Chorus of Radio Stuttgart, the sopranos Friederike Sailer and Liselotte Kiefer, the tenors Bernhard Michaelis and Naan Poeld, and the baritone Robert Titze are under the direction of Marcel Couraud, an unquestionably French conductor with a most considerable experience in the performance of major sacred works. The text, of course, is Latin, so that pronunciation of a foreign language is not a problem.

The noble pronouncement of the opening solo, "De profundis clamavi ad te," sets the mood of the work. This section is a good example of the composer's style. There are no startling innovations, no brilliant harmonic devices nor cleverness of rhythmic subtlety. There is a deceptive simplicity throughout the score which, in its black-and-white form, can not begin to recreate the religious fervor and emotional depth of the actual sounds in performance. It is said that Handel was deeply impressed with Lalande's vocal music, and that it influenced his development in this field. It is not difficult to accept this proposition; undoubtedly a skilled musicologist could dredge up ample evidence to support the theory, for certainly artistic honesty and a sincere religious fervor based on sound musical principles are cardinal assets in both men's contributions.

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The climax of the motet is the *Requiem Aeternam*, one of the finest pages of sacred music that exists. Here again the utmost simplicity of means contains an emotional quality of extraordinary power. The following *Lux Perpetua* is a sudden contrast of cheerful gaiety on top of the ecstatic devotions of the preceding section. As one commentator has said, Lalande considered God not to be of the dead, but of the living.

The LP record under consideration is a worthwhile addition to any record library, particularly important to those who collect notable vocal works, for this score must certainly ranks high on any thinking person's list, both from a historical and an emotional point of view. The performance is solid and rewarding. The soloists do not have the individuality and artistic presence of the personnel on a long out-of-print 78 rpm set that is the only other known recording of the *De Profundis*. It would be very difficult, however, to assemble a group today of the stature of Angelici, Planel, Noguera and Schennerberg.

I commend this work to your attention. Buy the score and devote a few evenings to studying its grave simplicity, its sustained power of communication and marvel at the uncomplicated, almost elementary construction of the piece. —A.W.P.

ENCORE MAHLER

MAHLER: *Symphony No. 1 in D.* Angel 35180, \$4.98 or \$3.48. **MAHLER:** *Symphony No. 9 in D* (3 sides); **SCHOENBERG:** *Verklärte Nacht* (1 side). Angel 3526B, \$9.98 or 35181/82, \$6.96. Paul Kletzki conducting the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra.

▲WELL, it was bound to happen sooner or later. Until these releases came along, not a single bar of Mahler's music had been cut from any Mahler recordings. The reason that conductors have not tampered with the scores is his continuous, *Durchkomponiert* style of writing, in which passages are seldom repeated literally since they are nearly always in a continu-

uous state of development. Of course, if a conductor finds two analogous passages in the same key he can cut from one to another, disregarding what has happened in the interim, just as Kletzki has done in the Scherzo of the *Ninth Symphony*. He has excised 115 bars of a highly integrated and involved movement, in which a complete *Laendler* with Trio is set at odds with a waltz in conflicting key system: a unique "double scherzo," whose every page contributes to a total understanding of the musical logic. Compared to this, the cut (exclusive of repeats) he makes in the *First Symphony* is negligible—merely 16 bars taken from the coda, to be sure, a remarkable modulation, which one may pretend not to notice.

Quite apart from these self-imposed disadvantages, Kletzki's performances in my estimation do not compare with the excellent ones by Horenstein, recently released by Vox, although some may prefer those by the beloved "High Priest" of Mahler, Bruno Walter. The nobility and deep feeling of Horenstein's *Ninth* are not to be found in Kletzki's version, for he has not striven for these qualities. The exceedingly Viennese first movement and the bucolic *Laendler* acquire a stern disciplined beat. The sharply-etched and sardonic *Rondo Burleske* is lashed into such a frenzy from the word "go" that no acceleration is possible for its final *Presto*. This is music that will make a strong impression under any firm hand, and here the first impression is quite dazzling. What more is to be said is realizable only through study of such rare achievements as those of Horenstein. The concluding *Adagio* is almost redeemed by Kletzki, until he reaches the coda and, like Walter, shies away from Mahler's frightening admonition, *Adagissimo*. The close of Mahler's greatest instrumental work is, so to speak, suspended in eternity—hence the phrase, and thus the challenge, which Horenstein has met with remarkable success.

The *First Symphony* seems to have fared better in respect to recordings. This is the seventh LP performance. Of these, however, only two—those of Walter and Horenstein—have found durable form for

the tremendous élan of that youthful work. Kletzki's interpretation has much to say that is worth hearing, though he does not understand, (as only Horenstein, in my estimation, did among the seven conductors,) that omitting the repeat in the first movement destroys its balance. Nor Horenstein's feeling for what Solomon has characterized as "the infinite range of color between *piano* and *pianissimo*." He knows how to build a passage, however, and the sureness of control with which he does what he has to do is admirable. The musicians of the Israel Philharmonic are altogether superb.

The recording of both works from Angel is extremely good in itself, but has stiff competition. The reproduction both of Columbia (Walter) and Vox (Horenstein) of the *First Symphony* is fantastic. The utmost definition of detail is achieved by Columbia, however the Vox, which is almost as good in this respect, has a livelier and more natural resonance. The latter is true of the Vox *Ninth*, except for a few mishaps like the defection of the timpani sound at the climactic point of the opening movement (Mahler's version, surely of "Fate knocking at the door"). The Victor LP dubbing of Walter's historic performance made in 1938 by HMV does not compare sonically with the overall excellence of the Vox, and neither, basically, can the Angel, though some felicitous exceptions in matters of detail cry out to be quoted. In both works the gift packaging of Angel is, of course, far the most attractive, except for some equally fine packaging of the *First* by Columbia. But Angel's illustrated booklets are more informative about the Israel Philharmonic (as might be expected in its debut on records) than about the music. Actually, only two pages of each eight-page booklet are not identical.

The pairing of Mahler's last completed work with one of Schoenberg's earliest might be intended to show the alleged stylistic emergence of one composer from the other. A more interesting comparison in 20th-century attitudes would have been pairing Mahler's *Ninth* with Schoenberg's important symphonic work of the same year (1909), the *Five Pieces for Orchestra*.

The popular *Verklaerte Nacht* for string sextet came 10 years earlier, and is closer to the glowing world of the 19th century than to the uneasy man of two worlds—the Mahler of the *Ninth Symphony*. (Schoenberg has himself said that he had not yet discovered Mahler as a force in his life at that time, as he was then influenced chiefly by Strauss.) This new performance of *Transfigured Night* is lucid and pleasing, and would compete with the Ormandy version as an equally fine recording of the string orchestra version were it not that Kletzki also makes an unnecessary cut here of 25 bars just before the final section.

—Jack Diether

Bruckner's Te Deum

BRUCKNER: *Te Deum*; Frances Yeend (soprano), Martha Lipton (contralto), David Lloyd (tenor), Mack Harrell, baritone, Westminster Choir and Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York, conducted by Bruno Walter. **MAHLER:** *Kindertotenlieder*. Kathleen Ferrier (contralto) and Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Bruno Walter. Columbia ML 4980, \$5.95.

▲THIS *Te Deum* is so incomparably superior in every way to the two recordings that have preceded it that no more than a mention is owing them here. Bruno Walter is at his best and most affectionate, and his choral and orchestral forces are superb. Yeend's voice is a little shrill at times, but otherwise the solo work is on a high level. The balance is exceptional: the chorus is always perfectly clear and audible, yet so placed that the orchestra is never swamped. This is a far more natural effect than we have had in many choral recordings. There is some pre-echo, but not enough to do great damage. The Mahler, of course, is an old friend and surely one of the best recordings we have had of *Kindertotenlieder*. Formerly issued on two 10 inch sides, it is much more convenient in its new shape. Aside from the fact that the voice is close upon us, the reproduction is excellent —P.L.M.

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Frederick Stock and Artur Schnabel recording in 1942

SCHNABEL AND BEETHOVEN

BEETHOVEN: *Five Piano Concertos; Eroica Variations, Op. 35;* Artur Schnabel with London Symphony and London Philharmonic Orchestras conducted by Sir Malcom Sargent. RCA-Victor LCT-6700, 5 discs, \$19.90.

▲THESE, the first concerto recordings that Schnabel made, were recorded back in 1932, 1933 and 1935. Later, he remade the *Fourth* and *Fifth Concertos* twice and the *Second* once. In 1942, Schnabel planned to remake all with Frederick Stock and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, but only two were achieved owing to the untimely death of the conductor. It has always seemed to me that Schnabel and Stock were temperamentally better allied than he and any other conductor with whom he worked. In an interview

in 1942, the pianist expressed his satisfaction to me with the performances of the *Fourth* and *Fifth Concertos* made in Chicago, and said he was looking forward to completing the series with Dr. Stock. Schnabel was a great musician and a great pianist, one with identifying, characterizing and dramatizing powers in music of which he made a specialty. That he had points of difference in his later Beethoven interpretations will unquestionably be of interest to musicians and students, and this seems to me a just reason for the re-issue of his earlier recordings. In a final evaluation of his artistry, interpretative variations cannot be ignored. The transfer from old 78-rpm discs to LP has been remarkably handled by Victor engineers.

That there are other pianists, as well

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as Schnabel, who have identified themselves with these works remains an irrefutable fact. But the memory of a great artist of our own time should not be permitted to fade away, and Victor has been well advised to reawaken interest in these performances. Of modern versions of these concertos, my selections would be either Badura Skoda-Scherchen or Gieseking-Karajan in the *First*, and the Backhaus-Krauss version of the *Second* (Schnabel's postwar version is not one of his best). Schnabel should have remade the *Third Concerto*, an unexcelled performance in its day, for it is now challenged by the Solomon-Boult on HMV (which to my knowledge is not on LP), the Gilels-Cluytens, and the Backhaus-Boehm. Modern versions of the *Fourth* originating on LP (the Schnabel-Dobrowen was derived from 78s), which I favor, are the Gieseking-Karajan or the Backhaus-Krauss, and of the *Fifth* I favor the Backhaus-Krauss and the Serkin-Ormandy (the recent Fischer-Furtwangler is far less satisfactory for all the beauty of the performance). Most satisfying of all to me are the *Fourth* and *Fifth* which Schnabel made with Stock. I would not part with these recordings.

—P.H.R.

OPERA SPOTLIGHT

ECHOES OF THE GOLDEN AGE OF OPERA (recorded in the Metropolitan Opera House by Lionel Mapleson, 1901-1903). Selections from *Traviata*, *Huguenots*, *Tristan*, *Faust*, *Lohengrin*, *L'Africana*, *Walkuere*, etc. IRCC L-7006, \$4 plus transportation charges. (W. H. Seltsam, 318 Reservoir Avenue, Bridgeport, Conn.)

▲HERE is the fabulous Golden Age of opera in action! Recorded backstage, at the turn of the century, by Mapleson at the Metropolitan during actual performances, these fragments will give you (despite surface noises of varying degree) an idea of what has been properly termed the Golden Age of Operatic Singing. As fascinating to operatic fans as fossilized bones are to anthropologists, these white-hot glimpses will bring you such singers

as Sembrich, Melba, Nordica, Eduard de Reszke, Gadski, and Scotti, as they faced enthusiastic turn-of-the-century audiences (applause is often audible).

The voices of Jean de Reszke, Lucienne Breval, the tenors Anthes, Saleza and Salignac were never issued on commercial records, and, as far as one knows, here lies the only opportunity to hear these historic figures of the operatic stage. The brio of Sembrich's coloratura, the brilliancy of attack that was Melba's, Calvé singing a *pianissimo* high B at the end of the *Jewel Song* from *Faust*, and the voices of Jean and Breval soaring on high B-flats and B naturals from out the regrettable surface noise are all here on this historic treasure-chest.

You will acquire a technique in listening to these ancient fragments; following them with a score will help to define their musical outline, which varies in clarity. But lovers of the "good old days" will surely not wish to pass up this documentary recording.

—M. de S.

50 YEARS OF GREAT OPERATIC SINGING (Selected by Irving Kolodin with Foreword by George R. Marek). RCA Victor Limited Edition LCT 6701, 5 discs, \$29.95.

▲THIS handsomely bound set, comprising 68 selections from Victor Red Seal operatic records made between 1900 and 1950, is issued by and large for collectors, which does not imply a limit to its appeal. No other domestic company could assemble an album like this, unique in the annals of operatic singing over a half century. The old proverb about a gift horse intruded on my momentary vexation over the omission of some artists and what I deemed not the wisest selections of others. But rationality intervening made me realize the futility of censoring another critic's selections. My own choices would derive from one man's personal opinions. In an art collection, such as this, no one could possibly please everybody. Essentially, the selector of any art collection should please himself. Mr. Kolodin has chosen 68 operatic recordings by famous artists of past and present

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which, for one reason or another, can be qualified as great. His choice of artists suggests wisdom of forethought, but his omission of some of Victor's greatest artists of the past seems unpardonable. Eames, Schumann-Heink, Tetrazzini, Gadski, Gluck, Bori, De Luca, Schorr, Whitehill, and Journet come to mind immediately, as do some of the famous French singers that Hammerstein first introduced to this country, like Gerville-Réache and Dalmore. That the Italian tenor De Lucia is omitted will distress many, but not me.

Each of the five discs covers a decade with some needless duplications of several artists, which would have given space for others neglected. However, this is one man's selections, and who is to say that he did not choose wisely? A lot of ink can be spilt over this set, and undoubtedly some will do just this, but it will not serve record buyers to advantage, though it will probably permit a number of self-christened operatic authorities to inflate their egos. In all fairness to Mr. Kolodin, it should be pointed out that he must have been hard put on occasion in selecting some of his material as not all of the earlier singers' recordings are known to be accessible. One suspects more than one compromise was made.

Vol. I (1900-1910) begins with Tamagno's *Di quella pira*, not one of his best records since it is rather faint and vocally suggests strain on top tones. (Incidentally, the collection opens and closes with a tenor—Tamagno and Pearce. I am happy to see Pearce represented in this gallery of great artists, especially with his memorable *Lucia* recording.) Battistini comes after Tamagno in *Alla vita* from *Il Ballo in Maschera*. His suave artistry is followed by that of elegant French basso, Plancon, who is heard in an aria from *Don Carlo*. Good old Verdi is displaced next by Mozart with Patti singing *Batti, batti*, not one of her best recordings. The next two selections are by Sembrich, whose voice did not take too well to the horn method of recording. She is heard in *Casta diva* and *Bel raggio lusingher*. Melba's *Mad Scene* from *Hamlet* is No. June, 1955

7, and No. 8 is the duet from *La Bohème* by Melba and Caruso. Technically, Melba's *Hamlet* aria may be an artistic feat but vocally it has some weird sounds to say the least, but the beauty of her voice is substantiated in the duet. Caruso's *Spirto gentil* from *La Favorita* comes next, one of the noted tenor's finest records with lyrical singing that was too soon lost. Scotti's fine *Monologue* from *Falstaff* follows, then comes the duet from *Don Pasquale* by Sembrich and Scotti in which the soprano's upper voice is heard at its best on records. Plancon returns in the *Song of the Flea* from *The Damnation of Faust*, to be followed by Renaud's *Vision fugitive* from *Hérodiade*. Next we have Sembrich singing the waltz from *The Merry Widow*, soundwise a lovely record. Calve's *Habanera* from *Carmen*, Farrar's lovely *Gavotte* from *Manon*, and Caruso's forgotten aria from *Pagliacci*—No, *Pagliacci, non son!* brings the decade to a close.

Vol. II (1910-1920) opens with the artistic singing of the first act duet from *Carmen* by Lucy Isabelle Marsh and John McCormack. Then comes the unjustly forgotten duet, *Si tu m'aimes* from *Carmen* by Matzenauer and Amato. No. 3 is Caruso's fine record of the tenor aria from Verdi's *Macbeth*. No. 4 is the famous, and as yet uncancelled on records, singing of *The Dream* from *Manon* by Clement, and No. 5 is the duet from *Manon* by Farrar and Caruso. Destinn's *O patria mia* from *Aida* is next. Then comes Hempel's lovely *Qui la voce* from *I Puritani*, unfortunately without the *Vien diletto*. There follows the duet from Act 2 of *La Traviata*, sung with much feeling by Hempel and Amato, Muzio's early *Mi chiamano Mimi* (not as impressive as her later one), McCormack's artistic singing of an aria from Méhul's *Joseph*, Alda's fine record of *In quelle trine* from *Manon Lescaut*, Ruffo's *Gia! mi dicon venali!* from *Tosca* and *O monumento* from *La Gioconda*, Slezak's *Magische toene* from Goldmark's *Queen of Sheba*, and lastly Caruso's *Donna non vidi mai* from *Manon Lescaut*.

Vol. III (1920-1930) opens with two records from the acoustical era (the balance except for one other selection from

this point onward are electrical). The first selection, by Caruso, is the second part of *O paradieso* from *L'Africana*, made in 1920, which some claim was an early electrical experiment since the quality of the noted tenor's high tones are clearer in sound than in any other recording that he made. Gigli's *Improviso* from *Andrea Chenier*, which follows, is unmistakably an acoustical product. No. 3 is Mary Garden's *Air des cartes* from *Carmen*, No. 4 is Senta's *Ballad* from *The Flying Dutchman* well sung by Florence Austral and chorus, and No. 5 (acoustical) is Martinelli's heroic singing of *O muto asil* from *William Tell*. Rosa Ponselle is honored next, but only in the trio from *La Forza Del Destino* from Act 4, made in 1928, with Martinelli and Pinza. One of Chaliapin's finest records, the *Death Scene* from *Don Quichotte*, with Olive Kline, follows. Next is Galli-Curci's *Mad Scene* from *Hamlet* with pleasanter vocal sounds than the earlier Melba one. Then comes Onegin's fine *O don fatale* from *Don Carlo*, Nina Koshetz's expressive singing of the soprano aria from *Prince Igor*, and lastly Schipa's admired *Se il mio nome* from *The Barber of Seville*.

Vol. IV (1930-1940) opens with two arias from *Don Giovanni* by Pinza, neither of which represents the noted basso at his best. Next is Tina Lemnitz's lovely singing of *Dovo sono* from *Le Nozze di Figaro*, then Frieda Leider's artistic *Or sai chi l'onore* from *Don Giovanni*. No. 4 is Melchior's *Spring Song* from *The Valkyrie*, and No. 5 is Flagstad's *Ocean, thou mighty monster* from *Oberon*. These records were made with Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra. Next is the fine duet record that Kipnis made, with Ruzicka, from *Der Rosenkavalier*. This is followed by the *Bell Song* from *Lakmé* by Lily Pons, and Rethberg's wonderful singing of *Morr' ma prima in grazia* from *Il Ballo in Maschera*. Then comes the aria, *Piango su voi* from *Simon Boccanegra*, by Tibbett with Martinelli, Bampton and Nicholson—one of the finest records that Tibbett made. Bjoerling is represented next with his remembered 1938 recording of *Ah! si ben mio* from *Il Trovatore*. Rosa Raisa is recalled by her *La mamma morte*

from *Andrea Chenier*, and lastly Ina Souez is heard in her fine performance of *Ernani, involami*.

Vol. V (1940-1950) opens with Dorothy Maynor's sweetly sung *Depuis le jour* from *Louise*, then comes Rose Bampton's expressive *D'amour l'ardente flamme* from *The Damnation of Faust*, and Helen Traubel's well sung *Divinités du Styx* from *Alceste*. No. 4 is Leonard Warren's impressive singing of *Scintille diamont* from *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, and No. 5 is Maggie Teyte's lovely 1947 recording of an aria from Grétry's *Le Tableau parlant*. This is followed by Milanov's admired *Casta diva*, the well sung duet *Ai nostri monti* from *Il Trovatore* by Elmo and Gigli, and the equally well sung duet *Ah! Dite alla giovane* from *La Traviata* by Albanese and Merrill. Bjoerling's fine *Nessun dorma* from *Turandot* follows, then comes Steber's *Summertime* from *Porgy and Bess*. Next is Stevens' *Non so più cosa son* from *Le Nozze di Figaro* and the *Cradle Song* from Smetana's *The Kiss* by Novotna. The finale is Pearce's famous record of the Recitative and aria, *Fra poco a me ricovero*, from *Lucia*.

The engineering in the acoustical recordings is quite remarkable in some cases, and few of the electrical recordings seem to have lost anything from the transfer to LP. Three acoustical recordings unfortunately have been pitched too high in the dubbing. These are Alda's *Manon Lescaut*, Caruso's *Pagliacci*, and Russo's *Tosca* selections.

—P.H.R.

●
GANNE: *Les Saltimbanques*; Janine Micheau (Suzanne), Geneviève Moizan (Marion), Michel Roux (Grand Pin-gouin); Robert Massart (André), Raymond Amade (Paillasse), Robert Des-tain (Des Etiquettes), Marcel Car-pentier (Malicorne), Rivers Cadet (L'Au-bergiste), Claude Arlay (Rigebert), Vallé Valdy (Le Vicomte), with or-chestra and chorus conducted by Pierre Dervaux. Telefunken TW 91044-45, 2 discs, \$11.90.

▲THIS arrangement of Ganne's score by Max de Rieux contains a speaker who sets the stage from time to time, and a great deal of spoken dialogue. The

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composer of *Marche Loraine* and *Le Père de la Victoire* has sprinkled his light score liberally with charming waltz songs—notably one called *C'est l'amour*, which is not altogether unknown in this country—and other fine things such as a *buffe* quartet. The singers in this cast are obviously enjoying a holiday, and they enter into the spirit with enormous gusto. Still, if one does not understand the French, so much talking must be a bore, and even if one does, it is likely to become tiresome with repetition. The libretto, printed on the two covers of the container, is confusing, for it omits the musical numbers and does not always follow the spoken text as delivered.

—P.L.M.

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MENOTTI: *The Saint of Bleecker Street* (Musical Drama in 3 Acts); Gabrielle Ruggiero (Annina), David Poleri (Michele), Leon Lishner (Don Marco), Gloria Lane (Desideria), and others, with a chorus and orchestra conducted by Thomas Schippers. RCA Victor LP set LM-6032, \$7.96.

▲MILLIONS of prospective customers for this set already have seen and heard the work, either on Broadway or on television (although Act III, Scene I was cut out altogether on TV and numerous lines elsewhere excised for reasons of time or taboo). The libretto, as usual by the composer himself, has to do with an emotionally disturbed young lady in the Greenwich Village tenement district—is she a saint or a psychotic, or both? This is hardly the place to go into Menotti's involved and rather well disguised working-out of the religious rationale that gives his book its intellectual substance. For all practical purposes the point is that, whatever its inconclusiveness and even evasiveness as to plot and theme, *The Saint of Bleecker Street* is superbly tailored musical theater, entertaining every minute of the way and sometimes quite edifying—it gives you something to think about, at least, if not something to whistle.

Which brings up the matter of the music, and really there is not a thing to say that one has not said about Menotti's earlier

operas. The style is consistently Puccini-cum-Broadway, distinguished as to workmanlike continuity but utterly unoriginal and manifestly no evidence at all of any inner growth on the composer's part. This is not remarked testily, nor do I think that it is necessarily a sad or a sorry fact. You can't have everything, and surely this "musical drama" is altogether a considerable contribution to the evolving lyric theater, which must more and more employ the innovations of modern stagecraft if it be worthy of any further evolution. In short, without venturing into the deep waters of the whence and whither of opera, *The Saint* represents an artful transformation of second-rate music into a first-class entertainment.

It is a demanding score, vocally; despite a desperate dearth of rememberable melody it comes across beautifully in this recording because the cast is right on the ball every minute, but I sincerely hope that the workshops will avoid it because the results would be simply disastrous in amateur hands. The composer himself supervised this performance, which was especially fortunate for reasons of future reference, and Schippers is a wonderfully gifted conductor with a particular penchant for anything of Menotti's. The principal singers are most of them familiar to Manhattan operagoers; their various endowments are enlisted to advantage but there is so much yelling and miscellaneous emoting called for that it is frequently difficult to lose one's self to the lyricism that underlies the sustained melodrama. The recorded sound breathes immediacy, but with everyone so painstakingly on mike there is no illusion of distance and hence a certain studied studioishness that detracts from the wanted theatrical atmosphere.

—J.L.

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OPERATIC RECITAL: *Nozze di Figaro* —O saeume laenger nicht; *Zauberfleete*—Ach, ich fuehl's (Mozart); *Martha*—Die letzte Rose (Flotow); *Mignon*—Kennst du das Land. (Thomas); Margot Guilleaume (soprano) with Berlin State Opera Orchestra, conducted by Walter Lutze. Telefunken TM 68025, 10-inch, \$2.98.

▲MISS GUILLEAUME, known to us for the most part as a singer of Bach and Buxtehude, leaves no doubt in this recital that she is a stylist also in the music of 18th and 19th-century opera. It has been long since *Deh vieni non tardar* has been recorded with comparable charm, despite the use of the German translation and the non-use of the *appoggiaturas* which give the melody such appealing curves. *Ach, ich fuehl's* is sung from the heart and in melting tones. Perhaps *The last Rose of Summer* is a little straight in conception—even the high ending so long associated with it is eschewed. Of course Goethe's original poem of *Kennst du das Land?* is in German, but Thomas set a French translation, and the twain do not meet on equal terms when pure Goethe is shoe-horned into this aria. Still there are few singers today who can sing the piece so appealingly. The recording is generally good, though I was too conscious of the bass in the punctuating chords that accompany *Deh vieni*. —P.L.M.

GREAT LOVE DUETS from *La Bohème* and *Manon Lescaut* (Puccini), and from *Manon* (Massenet); Dorothy Kirsten and Richard Tucker with Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, Fausto Cleva (cond.). Columbia ML-4981, \$3.98.

▲WHAT impressed this listener was the realistic presence of the singers and the orchestra; this is truly a wonderful recording. The title is a bit misleading since solos and duets are included. We have the scene from Mimi's entrance in Act 1 of *La Bohème* to the close of the act. Then Miss Kirsten changes her role and sings *Musetta's Waltz*, and returns to the role of Mimi with the *Farewell* from Act 3. The soprano is next heard in the aria, *L'ora, o Tarsi*, from *Manon Lescaut*, and then joined by the tenor in the duet, *Tu amore? Tu? Sei tu*, both from Act 2. Then comes the soprano solo from Act 4, *Sola... perduta... abbandonata!* and the duet, which follows. The final selection is the *Love Duet* from the Saint Sulpice scene in Massenet's *Manon*. The artistic competence of both singers sustains the

listener's interest. Admirers of these singers will definitely want this record.

—J.N.

PUCCINI: *La Rondine* (Opera in 3 Acts); Eva De Luca (Magda), Giacinto Prandelli (Ruggero), Luciano della Pergola (Prunier), Ornella Rovero (Lisette), Vladimiro Pagano (Rambaldo), and others. Antonio Guarnieri Orchestra and Chorus of Milan, Federico del Cupolo, conductor. Columbia Entré EL-12, 2 discs, \$3.96.

▲WITH this recording, all the Puccini operas, from *Manon Lescaut* onward, have now been recorded by some company or other. *La Rondine* is not one of Puccini's strongest scores, but it is a work of charm and sophistication, filled with the trademarks of this ever popular composer. It boasts two typical soprano arias in the first act, a stirring ensemble in Act 2, and a rather lachrymose tenor solo in the final act, which incidentally is the weakest. The gayety and effervescence that characterize the second act of *Bohème* are also characteristic of the second act of *La Rondine*.

When *La Rondine* (première, Monte Carlo, 1917) was first given at the Metropolitan on March 10, 1928, its 13 performances during four seasons owed most of their success to the enchanting personality and vocal finesse of Lucrezia Bori, who made her operatic farewell as Magda on March 21, 1936, her last appearance in a full length opera.

Eva De Luca, the Magda of the present set, is no Bori, but she interprets the part with surprising aptness, and sings it quite acceptably. Giacinto Prandelli, the most familiar singer in the cast, does well by his last act solo, *Dimmi che vuoi seguirmi alla mia casa*. The roles of Prunier and Lisette, so satisfactorily presented by Armand Tokatyan and Editha Fleischer in the Metropolitan performances, are less happily sung here. Federico del Cupolo is a knowing Puccini conductor, but the recorded sound is on the shrill order. Undoubtedly, this low priced album will be a desired item for Puccini fans. —M. de S.

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MORE ZARZUELAS



CHAPI: *El Barquillero*; Tony Rosado, Carlos Munguia, Juan de Andia, Madrid Singers, Symphony Orchestra, Ataulfo Argenta (cond.). London International 10" W-91205, \$2.98.

CHAPI: *La Revolosa*; Ana Maria Iriarte, Ines Rivadeneira, Manuel Ausensi, others, Madrid Singers, Madrid Chamber Orchestra, same conductor. London International TW-91014, \$3.98.

CHAPI: *La Tempestad*; Tony Rosado, Pilar Lorengar, Manuel Ausensi, Carlos Munguia, others, Madrid Singers, same orchestra and conductor. London International TW-91029-30, \$7.96.

▲THESE three *zarzuelas* by Rupert Chapi (1851-1909), "whose admirers hailed him as the 'Spanish Massenet,'" are favorites in Spain and South America. The first, *The Wafer Seller*, deals with the triumph of love of two young people. However, one will be hard put to grasp the story from the selections offered here even though they are tuneful and pleasing for their gaiety. The singing is uneven. *La Revolosa*, as I pointed out in the October 1954 issue, is regarded as the greatest



Ana Maria Iriarte

of *zarzuelas*, but for what reason I cannot say, as it seems lightweight to me. Its success is probably due to the fact that it typifies characters that are very real to the Spaniards—the heroine, a woman of integrity, and her suitor, who is somewhat of a coxcomb. Ana Maria Iriarte is a fine artist, the best of the cast. This is the same performance that Montilla issued previously with bettered reproduction. *La Tempestad (The Storm)* has a melodramatic plot, rather loosely told in the notes. The scene is laid in a Breton village, at the beginning of the 19th century, and the story deals with men of the sea. Musically, this work is finer than *La Revolosa* and its tuneful elegance tells why Chapi was compared to Massenet. The singing is on the whole much better. In all three *zarzuelas*, the orchestral direction of Argenta is especially praiseworthy, though his ardor on occasion lets the orchestra almost swamp the singers. One wishes that complete librettos were supplied with these and other works, for missing dialogue would clarify the tales and make them more enjoyable from the records.

▲**CHUECA:** *Aqua, Azucarillos y Aguardiente*; Tony Rosado, Ana Maria Iriarte, Antonio Perz, others, Madrid Singers, Madrid Chamber Orchestra, Ataulfo Argenta (cond.). London International 10" 91016, \$2.98.

▲THIS is one of those plots which appeal to people who know Spain and Madrid in particular, all about sellers of water, sweets and liquor; nurse maids, children and quarreling women. The music is most attractive from the overture with its spirited ending which later becomes the *Wafer Sellers Chorus*. A bit confusing from the record if sense instead of nonsense is sought. Rosado and Iriarte



Tony Rosado

are the best singers. Frederico Chueca (1846-1908) was a gifted composer in his field. This is the same performance that Montilla brought out earlier, reproducively refurbished.

LUNA: *Molinos de Viento*; Pilar Lorengar, Manuel Ausensi, Marlos Munguia, A. Diaz Martos, Madrid Singers, Grand Symphony Orchestra, Ataulfo Argenta. London International TW-91036. \$3.98.

▲**PABLO LUNA** (1880-1942) was not as gifted as Chapi or Chueca and in this *sarsuela* laid in Holland, conventionally called *Windmills* the music is essentially Spanish. The plot is unbelievable, though not more so than most operetta ones. Tuneful, light and frothy, this work has sustained its place in the Spanish theatre since 1910. It is well sung with a fine soprano and three competent male artists, long known and admired in the *sarsuela* field. Like all of London's issues, it is brightly recorded with the knowing Argenta at the orchestral helm.

SERRANO: *La Cancion del Olvido*; Pilar Lorengar, Manuel Ausensi, Carlos Munguia, Madrid Singers, Symphony Orchestra, Ataulfo Argenta (cond.). London International TW-91026, \$3.98.

SERRANO: *Los de Aragon*; Tony Rosado, Carlos Munguia, Madrid Singers, Grand Symphony Orchestra, same conductor. London International 10" W-91027, \$2.98.

▲BOTH of these *sarsuelas* are best described as lightweights. Jose Serrano (1873-1941) knew how to write tunes but not very memorable ones. The first, *The Song of Forgetfulness*, has a plot about love in an imaginary town in the Kingdom of Naples in 1799. The notes do not clarify the action. I suspect those who have heard this work in the theatre have reasons to admire it. The singing is generally excellent throughout. *The People of Aragon* is even less attractive than the *The Song of Forgetfulness*, and its tale does not place the Aragonese in a favorable light. The heroine, who left her home to become a concert singer, seems to have committed a crime in the eyes of her people. That she returns to repent her artistic endeavors and marry her local swain may be the way the folks in Aragon wanted things to be, but it is nonsense to folks outside of Spain. Anyway, it permits the composer to drag in religion in the finale. There's plenty of local color in the score. The singing is generally good.

USANDIZAGA: *Las Golondrinas*; Pilar Lorengar, Ana Maria Iriarte, Raimundo Torres, Carlos Munguia, Nicolas Aldanondo, A. Diaz Martos, Chorus, Grand Symphony Orchestra, Ataulfo Argenta (cond.). London International TW-91031/32/33, \$11.94.

▲THIS is one of the most important International releases of London. This is a true Spanish opera,

not a *sarsuela*. Jose Maria Usandizaga (1887-1915) was a singularly gifted composer who, like Arriaga before him, died too young to fulfill his ambitions. He had a gift for melody, drama and the theatre. His artistry was on a high level and listening to this score one can understand why he was hailed after its first performance in 1914 as "the bright hope of the Spanish lyric theatre." The tale could be called a Spanish *Pagliacci*, for it deals with the loves and jealousies of members of a circus troupe, and it ends tragically. The singers are all good, but the honors go to Iriarte, Lorengar and Torres. Excellent recording.

VIVES: *Bohemios*; Tony Rosado, Teresa Berganza, Manuel Ausensi, Carlos Munguia, A. Diaz Martos, others, Madrid Singers, Grand Symphony Orchestra, Argenta (cond.). London International TW-91038, \$3.98.

▲THIS zarzuela has many catchy tunes. It is a close cousin to Puccini's *La Boheme* since its locale is the Bohemian quarter of Paris. No tragedy here, the heroine becomes successful singer instead of dying of consumption. The hero writes music and his lady love gets him a commission to compose an operetta. Amadeo Vives (1871-1932) achieved his greatest success with *Marixa*, but *Dona Francisquita* and *Bohemios* achieved great popular success and probably have been performed more often. *Bohemios* is especially an appealing score with tunes that one remembers. It is well sung; a better recording and production than a previous release.

—P.H.R.



Pilar Lorengar

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Notes and Reviews

THREE IS IN SOULS a sympathy with sounds, and as the mind is pitched the ear is pleased with melting airs or martial, brisk or grave; some chord in unison with what we hear is touched within us, and the heart replies.

—William Cowper

ORCHESTRA

BEETHOVEN: *Leonora Overtures, No. 1, Op. 138* and *No. 2, Op. 72a*. London 10", LD 9185, \$2.98. *Leonora Overture No. 3, Op. 72a; Fidelio—Overture, Op. 72b*. London 10", LD 9186, \$2.98. Clemens Krauss conducting the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra.

▲THESE overtures were the last recordings that Clemens Krauss made. A lifetime of association with them is intimated in his smoothly adjusted and well balanced interpretations. Krauss did not lose sight of the relation of the *Fidelio* or *Leonora No. 3* overtures to the opera, though only the former was intended by Beethoven to be associated. In the latter, he did not inflate the drama but performed with a noble dignity that commands respect. His performances of the other overtures command equal respect with any extant. The playing of the orchestra is splendid, and the recording excellent. —P.H.R.

BEETHOVEN: *Overtures—The Creatures of Prometheus, Op. 43; The Ruins of Athens, Op. 113; Coriolan, Op. 62; Namensfeier, Op. 115; Consecration of the House, Op. 124; King Stephen, Op. 117*; Vienna State Opera Orchestra conducted by Hermann Scherchen. Westminster WL-5335, \$2.99.

▲SOUNDWISE, this is a wonderful disc. Some of the overtures were included on Westminster 5302, previously reviewed. Since writing that review, June, 1955

I have had occasion to re-hear the Badura-Scherenbach *Second Concerto* and the *Consecration of the House*. Neither quite sustains the first impressions previously noted. All the overtures are played with meticulous care but with an overall attention to detail that does not light up the music-making. My attention being recalled to the van Beinum performance of *Consecration of the House* I find in its favor. The balance is in Scherchen's favor, though I prefer Toscanini's *Prometheus* and hope for an LP version of his *Coriolan*. The omnibus offering does not always suffice, and duplications are inevitable with LP to arrive at complete satisfaction.—P.H.R.

BALAKIREFF: *Tamar—Symphonic Poem*; **DVORAK:** *Symphonic Variations, Op. 78*; Royal Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham. Columbia 3ML-4974, \$3.98.

▲IN 1913, Sir Thomas Beecham introduced Mili Balakireff's tone poem *Tamar* to English audiences. Although this piece was begun in 1866 it was not completed until 1882. Even the casual listener will be surprised at the debt that the Rimsky-Korsakov of *Scheherazade* owes Balakireff. This vivid showpiece, based on a poem of Lermontov, abounds with orientalisms. It concerns a Georgian princess who lures men to her castle, then kills them and throws them into the nearby river. Sir Thomas Beecham's performance is full-blooded and realistic and benefits from the spacious, well-balanced recording. Fistou-

lari's performance is outclassed by the present version, and even Ansermet's is over-shadowed.

On the reverse side we have the first domestic recording of Dvorak's *Symphonic Variations*. This warmly colored score, composed in 1877, uses as a theme one of Dvorak's songs for male chorus. There are some 26 variations and a finale. The influence of Brahms is immediately apparent, but Dvorak's genius keeps the listener's interest at all times. This seems to be the first domestic LP, since a Czech recording of the score is not available at present. Beecham has an affinity for the scores of the Czech master, so we welcome the present release. As in *Tamar* we have warmly-hued, spacious recording.

—R.H.R.

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BERLIOZ: *Symphonie fantastique*, Op. 14; Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Herbert von Karajan. Angel 35202, \$4.98 & \$3.48.

▲IF ever a cover were devised for attracting the Berlioz enthusiast, this is it. The picture of Berlioz, after a picture by Signol made in 1832, is reproduced in full color, and the urge to frame it is one to which many will succumb. The orchestral playing is superb, as fine as in any record extant, with impressive realism in the *March to the Scaffold* and the *Finale*. Karajan is more successful in these movements than elsewhere. Elsewhere, the extravagant impressions and passions of Berlioz are treated somewhat stolidly. Somehow the fantastic visions of the composer seem to evade German-born musicians, no matter how universal their outlook may be or their abilities to grasp the purport of other composers of foreign extraction. In an earlier recording of Roussel's *Fourth Symphony*, Karajan, for all his skill as an orchestral technician, left one with the feeling, as he does here, that much of the emotional character of the work was alien to him. Splendid recording does not suffice to give precedence to any performance, but I suspect a picture in this case may prompt some buyers to duplicate a favorite set.

—P.H.R.

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BLOCH: *Four Episodes* for piano, strings and winds; **BRITTON:** *Sinfonietta* for winds and strings; William Masselos (piano) and the Knickerbocker Chamber Players (in the former) and the MGM Chamber Ensemble (in the latter) both conducted by Izler Solomon. MGM LP E-290, \$2.98.

▲HAPPENS that I heard Masselos and the Knickerbockers under Solomon perform the Bloch work last November in New York. They did a superlative job, and I am pleased to see that some recording company executive thought so, too, in this case the sharp-eared Edward Cole of MGM. The score dates from 1926, as if that were of any controlling consequence in discussing Bloch, whose style has been more or less identifiable, if distinctive, before that and ever since. The *Episodes* represent this composer at his impersonal best, which is simply to say that it represents the working out of essentially musical problems—the while posing rather serious problems indeed for the participants, especially the pianist. The early Britten piece (1932) will surprise many of his latter-day adherents. If ever a burgeoning composer seemed destined for the twelve-tone path, it was the Britten of this little study in cerebration. Would that the younger bathtub brewers of the Webern distillate had a modicum of Britten's felicity, which was manifest even in this promising augury of the path not taken. Solomon conducts both works with his usual efficient angularity. The recorded sound is decidedly superior. —J.L.

BORODIN: *Symphony No. 2 in B Minor*; **TCHAIKOVSKY:** *Suite No. 1 in D*, Op. 43; the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York conducted by Dimitri Mitropoulos. Columbia LP ML-4966, \$3.98.

▲CRASHING good performances. The two works are right up the conductor's alley and he makes as much of them than any of his competitors, more for my taste. The only other version of the Tchaikovsky is now several years old. There are plenty of choices on the Borodin, including a wonderfully recorded Mer-

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June, 1956

"A great orchestra, new to records, makes its first appearance . . . emerges with flying colors." *Saturday Review*, April 30, 1955

the ISRAEL philharmonic

under the direction of PAUL KLETZKI



DAVID by Michelangelo
(from the cover design of the
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cury disc (Dorati) and a splendidly performed Bluebird bargain (Malko). But nobody infuses the music with quite so much life as Mitropoulos pumps into it, and I must say that the Philharmonic boys are on their best behavior. One would have liked a slightly more lush string tone, to be sure, but you can't have everything. Fine sound. —J.L.

BORODIN: *Symphony No. 2 in B minor, Op. 5*; **IPPOLITO-IVANOV:** *Caucasian Sketches, Op. 10*; Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Paul Kletzki. Angel 35145, \$4.98 & \$3.48.

▲KLETZKI gives us a manly and vigorous performance of Borodin's symphony. The orchestral playing is splendid, far ahead of most issues, and the recording is realistically alive. Indeed, the brilliance as well as richness of sound is gratifying. Kletzki is less sensational than Mitropoulos and more firmly controlled than Dorati. His performance of the *Caucasian Sketches* also is fine, but he has strong competition here from Mitropoulos and Désormière with the former being equally as sumptuously recorded as Kletzki. Decisions on performances of both these works may be governed by the couplings. —P.H.R.

BRAHMS: *Serenade No. 2 in A, Op. 16*; the Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam conducted by Carlo Zecchi. Epic LP LC-3116, \$3.98.

▲PAINFULLY oom-pah-pah in places, but a solid performance at least to the extent that all the notes are there. Also, the competition having been withdrawn in recent months, you have to take it or leave it. The reproductive quality is generally excellent, although the Epic characteristic of over-emphasis at either end is occasionally obtrusive. Zecchi does not impress me as aptitudinally cut out for the romantic repertory. Only a few months ago he gave us a *Rhenish* that would have done credit to a military band. Obviously he is a virtuoso stick man because the Concertgebouw is a superbly responsive orchestra and still they know

better how such music should go—to have got them to play this way required a powerful personality and an even more persuasive technique. It will be interesting to hear his interpretations in the literature that calls for more planes than waves. —J.L.

BRITTEN: *A Simple Symphony*; the strings of the New Symphony Orchestra of London conducted by Eugene Goossens. London LP LD-9184, \$2.98.

▲THIS work is neither simple nor, really, a symphony. It is reasonable to regard it as a sort of progress report on the burgeoning Britten (he had just entered his twenties) because it is in fact a synthesis of works he had composed between the ages of nine and twelve. All of its themes derive from piano pieces dating from that interval. The movement indications—*Boisterous Bourrée*, *Playful Pizzicato*, *Sentimental Saraband* and *Frolicsome Finale*—are a sufficient hint to the nature of the music. It is tightly written, slyly witty, and overall an impressive *jeu d'esprit*. Splendid playing, finely resonant sound. —J.L.

BRUCKNER: *Symphony No. 4 in E Flat ("Romantic")*; **SIBELIUS:** *Symphony No. 7 in C, Op. 105*; the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Paul Van Kempen. Telefunken LP set LGX-66026/7, \$9.96.

▲ONLY medium good sound; I suspect that both performances were transferred from 78s. The Bruckner is beautifully played, not so much clearly molded as lovingly dawdled over. Indeed, the tempi adopted force an outright cut of the *Scherzo* repeat, and this hardly improves the already misshapen if admittedly malleable contour of the work. Altogether I would recommend the Epic version, which is far better engineered and two dollars cheaper. —J.L.

CHOPIN: *Piano Concerto No. 2 in F minor, Op. 21*; **SAINT-SAENS:** *Piano Concerto No. 4 in C minor, Op. 44*; Alexander Brailowsky (piano) with

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Boston Symphony Orchestra conducted by Charles Munch. RCA Victor LP disc LM-1871, \$3.98.

▲MY sympathy goes out in advance to those who will be making up their minds whether to acquire this great performance of Saint-Saëns' best concerto or whether to avoid at all costs the fussy, mannered, explosive, poetryless version of Chopin's adorable *F minor*. No doubt about it, the Saint-Saëns is given the phonographic representation of its life. All the grand gestures of the Third French Republic acting style that its composer put into it Brailowsky and Munch have pulled out of it and offered to us all for our delectation. What's more, there is "new orthophonic" sound; and really, has the piano and orchestra combination ever before been recorded more faithfully? I doubt it. As for Chopin, better take somewhat lo-fi Novaes and Klemperer on an early Vox LP disc. —C.J.L.

DVORAK: *Concerto in G minor, Op. 33;* Rudolf Firkusny (piano) with the Cleveland Orchestra, George Szell (cond.). Columbia M1-4967, \$3.98.

▲RUDOLF FIRKUSNY deserves a vote of thanks for reviving interest in this concerto, which he has revised and, judging from the reception of his many performances in recent years, begun to popularize in the concert hall. The work is not immediately as appealing as Dvorak's *Cello* and *Violin Concertos*. Its almost complex first movement, lyrical and stormy in character, suggests an emotional disturbance, and there is a melancholic strain in the lovely *Andante*. The final *Allegro con fuoco* is more characteristic of the objective Dvorak with its bold spirit and melodic patterns. Listening to this wonderful recording, I was captivated by the splendid teamwork of the pianist and the conductor. One had the feeling that they have been playing this work together for a long time. Firkusny explores fully the expressive potentialities of the piano's music. His is a more vital and often more caressive performance than a previous one by

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Friedrich Wuehrer, and Szell is decidedly more closely allied to the spirit of Dvorak than Wuehrer's partner, Rudolf Moralt. This music asks as much for dynamic as poetic temperament on the part of both pianist and conductor. —P.H.R.

DVORAK: *Symphony No. 4 in G, Op. 88; Scherzo Capriccioso, Op. 66;* the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Wolfgang Swallisch. Angel LP 35214, \$4.98 or \$3.48.

▲THIS Swallisch is a conductor to watch. I had not encountered his work before and I certainly did not imagine that he would challenge Kubelik in this ever delightful symphony. I am happy to report that he does indeed—happy, that is, because the sound is absolutely the finest I have heard on Angel to date, and that is no small compliment. As durable as the Szell and Walter performances have proved, Kubelik was pretty well acknowledged the first place heretofore, and he had enjoyed some of HMV's finest engineering. Lo, Swallisch not only infuses the music with far more zest but he secures a more virtuoso performance (from the same orchestra, mind you) and the stunning sonic quality of the finished product has to be heard to be believed. This disc is a real "sleeper." The *Opus 66* is a little charmer, as those who know it from the reverse side of the Westminster version of the *E Flat Symphony* can attest. The latter disc has just been discontinued, however, so that new buyers need not fear duplication. —J.L.

A CONCERT OF ENGLISH MUSIC: *The Perfect Fool—Ballet Suite, Op. 39 (Holst); Tintagel (Bax); The Banks of Green Willow; A Shropshire Lad—Rhapsody (Butterworth);* London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Sir Adrian Boult. London LL-1169, \$3.98.

▲THIS record is a "must" for all friends of English music. Here we have the first LP versions of several popular scores, including the first domestic release of the lovely, evocative pieces of George Butterworth. *The Banks of Green Willow*, a tone

poem based on the folk song of the same title, is delicately scored as is the rhapsody based on Housman's *A Shropshire Lad*. The composer is comparatively unknown in this country, but record collectors have cherished the 78 rpm versions of these pieces for some years. The new versions are infinitely superior sonically.

This fine collection also contains a new and exciting performance of the ballet music from Holst's one act opera, *The Perfect Fool*, first heard by English audiences in 1923. The music here recorded is in three sections, *The Dances of the Spirits of Earth, Water and Fire*. Hi-fi addicts will have a field day with the first section. Fortunately the recording matches the splendid performance. Also included is the first version in many years of the late Sir Arnold Bax' highly romantic mood piece *Tintagel*. The preface to the score, composed in 1917, says, in part, that it is "intended to evoke a tone picture of the castle-crowned cliff of Tintagel, and more particularly the wide distances of the Atlantic as seen from the cliffs of Cornwall on a sunny but not windless day." Sir Adrian Boult draws rich and beautiful sounds from the London Philharmonic Orchestra, and has been well-served by the recording engineers. All in all, this record is a gem, containing four contrasted, unfamiliar pieces, played by a master conductor and magnificently recorded.

—R.H.R.

GRIFFES: *The Pleasure Dome of Kubla Khan; The White Peacock, Op. 7, No. 1; Clouds, Op. 7, No. 4;* **LOEFFLER:** *Memories of my Childhood; Poem for Orchestra (La Bonne Chanson);* Howard Hanson conducting the Eastman-Rochester Symphony Orchestra. Mercury MG40012, \$3.98.

▲IN his later music, Charles Griffes (1884-1920) was influenced by French impressionism and by Oriental exoticism. The latter was in vogue during the second decade of this century and Griffes with his poetic imagination contrived two of his finest scores in *The Pleasure Dome of Kubla Khan* and the *Poem for Flute and Orchestra*. Of his four, impressionistic

piano pieces of *Opus 7*, called *Roman Sketches, The White Peacock* and *Clouds* (which he orchestrated later) with their individual poetic style are especially appealing in their instrumental dress. The music of Loeffler is sadly neglected these days. Though his works were much performed in the second and third decades of this century, they are all too seldom given these days. Born in Alsace in 1861, Loeffler lived for a period in his childhood in Russia—hence the inspiration for his work, *Memories of my Childhood* or "Life in a Russian Village", which I have always liked. His use of Russian folk material has a particular charm of its own. Loeffler was somewhat of a mystic and a man of fastidious tastes. He was a perfectionist "who polished his music until it was refined to a purity that satisfied his sense of the exquisite." The sensual and songful, poetic texture of his "La Bonne Chanson" bears this out. Hanson has devised an interesting program on this disc from two composers who created individual poetic styles. His performances convey his admiration for the music at hand. Superb recording.

—P.H.R.

HAYDN: *Symphony No. 44 in E Minor ("Trauersymphonie") and Symphony No. 85 in B Flat ("La Reine");* the Vienna Symphony Orchestra conducted by Paul Sacher. Epic LP LC-3059, \$3.98.

▲IF you want these two symphonies, acquire this disc by all means. Sacher is a splendid conductor and the engineers have done him no injustice beyond a certain bass emphasis that can be done away with in compensating. However, the problem of couplings in the Haydn symphony department is knotty indeed and everyone will have to make their own adjustments in accordance with their budgets. On the *Trauer*, for instance, I incline to Fricsay, but his version is coupled with the *Haffner*, on which I prefer Beecham or Walter Woeldike's, equally desirable, is coupled with the 49th, as is Scherchen's. On *La Reine*, the old Baltzer performance still holds up, and it is paired with a fine performance of the Haydn 82nd. So

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what can you do? Either you sit and wait or you duplicate, apparently. Should you adopt the latter position, Sacher's music-making compares with anyone else's in adherence to traditional Haydn-esque values. He lacks only intensity, which the tradition does not require. But a great many listeners do, myself included, and that is where the dilemma starts.

—J.L.

HAYDN: *Symphony No. 95 in C minor*;

MOZART: *Symphony No. 39 in E flat major, K. 543*; Glyndebourne Festival Orchestra conducted by Vittorio Gui. RCA Victor LHMV-12, \$4.98.

MOZART: *Symphony No. 34 in C major, K. 338*; *Symphony No. 38 in D major, K. 504 (Prague)*; Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Karl Bohm. London LL-1198, \$3.98.

▲ **MAESTRO** Gui gives us warm-hued, vital performances of two fine symphonies. The Haydn score has been unjustly neglected by conductors; at present only the rather erratic Scherchen version presents competition. Gui's treatment of the score is more idiomatic and is much better recorded. The oft-played Mozart Symphony is also recommended. Here the frothy last movement bubbles along as it seldom does in performance or recording. The sound is splendid throughout.

The Viennese performances lack the elegance and finesse of the English versions, but are superbly recorded. Karl Bohm adds a *Minuet, K. 409* to the *C major Symphony*, since it was probably composed for this score. The graceful Kubelik versions of these works will probably be preferable, if one wants this particular coupling, though elsewhere each symphony can be even bettered. The Gui performance of the *Prague Symphony* remains a most attractive one.

—R.H.R.

HINDEMITH: *Educational Music for String Ensembles, Op. 44* (complete); the Maurice Levine String Sinfonietta. MGM LP E-3161, \$3.98.

▲ **THIS** is the first complete recording of a pedagogically valuable and otherwise

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fascinating work dating from 1927. It is laid out in four sections as follows: nine pieces in first position for violin choir (designed for beginners), eight canons ditto (for slightly advanced students), eight pieces in first position for string choir (for moderately advanced students), and five pieces in first position for string orchestra (for really advanced students). Strictly speaking it is not *Gebrauchsmusik*, or "utility music," but *Gemeinschaftsmusik*—"community music," or *Sing- und Spiel-musik*, which means simply "music to be sung or played." And, one must add, "to be enjoyed." For these little delights are by no means dull exercises. They are real music, and remarkably good listening from end to end. Must be fun to play, too, because the Levine boys certainly seem to enjoy themselves. Silky sound.

—J.L.

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HINDEMITH: *Symphony, Die Harmonie der Welt*; the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by the composer. Decca LP DL-9765, \$4.98.

▲JUST as with the *Mathis der Maler* of the thirties, *Die Harmonie der Welt* is both an opera and a symphony. The earlier pair were based on the life of a famous painter, Mathias Gruenewald. Now the composer turns to another early German genius, the astronomer Johann Kepler (1571-1630). The latter's renowned treatise, *De Harmonice Mundi*, provides the tandem Hindemith title. Like its predecessor, the new symphony is perfectly programmatic; that their respective hero-subjects both were victims of political persecution and sundry awful distractions inevitably implies a moral content over and above other biographical parallels.

The movement designations of *Die Harmonie der Welt* are lifted straight out of the writings of an even earlier philosopher, the sixth-century Boethius. Hindemith has told us that a single Boethius dictum—loosely translated "that music is a part of our human nature; it has the power either to improve or debase our character"—is the key to this symphony. The movements are marked in turn *Musica Instrumentalis* (which the com-

poser defines as music in the accepted modern sense), *Musica Humana* (which "unifies the immateriality of our faculty of reasoning with our corporeal existence"), and *Musica Mundana* (which "governs the heavens, time, and the earth"). Add to this the fact that Kepler essayed a determination of the "music of the spheres," expressing its mathematical identity in terms of musical notation, and you begin to understand that any purely musical approach to this score will not do. Its lofty, grandiose message is inextricable.

So that to speak of the first movement as pointlessly ugly, the second as a moving synthesis of antithetical materials, and the third as a stunning but rather forbiddingly impersonal passacaglia, does not begin to treat adequately with the elaborate poetics of Hindemith's grand schematic conception. Intellectually and polemically, as it were, *Die Harmonie der Welt* is a masterpiece. As music, I am bound to report, it sounds like *Mathis* all over again but somewhat more diffuse. Ample breadth, but not much breath. The performance is impressive, the sound satisfactory. Noisy surfaces. —J.L.

■
MENDELSSOHN: *Symphony No. 3 in A Minor ("Scotch"); Overture, Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage*; the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Paul Kletzki. Angel LP 35183, \$4.98 or \$3.48.

▲THIS is magnificent orchestral playing and it is beautifully recorded, but I cannot dispel an impression that Kletzki misinterprets the essential nature of the music. The late Mendelssohn symphonies are an almost magical compound of classical and romantic qualities; they have a temperament and a contoured shape as well as a formal perfection. Kletzki does not give credence to the inherent emotionalism of the *Scotch*. As a consequence, it comes out as stiff as Stamitz, but still there is a splendor about it because the architectural mass is outlined and detailed with a fine linear sense. All said and done, I incline to recommend the version by, of all the unlikely contenders, Mitropoulos. He has a special genius for limning those few

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19th-century works that mean something to him, and his *Scotch* (paired much more economically with the complete *Reformation*) is one of the surpassing wonders of the recorded standard repertory. —J.L.

MOZART: *Concerto No. 17 in G major, K. 453; Concerto No. 27 in B flat major, K. 595*; Hans Henkemans (piano), Vienna Symphony Orchestra conducted by John Pritchard. Epic 3LC-3117, \$3.98.

▲ HENKEMANS' latest recording of two Mozart Concertos is on the same high level as his performances of the 18th and 19th Concertos released some months ago. He has a fine sense of style, with a crisp, bright tone. If John Pritchard is not the most imaginative Mozart conductor, he is at least a good accompanying one, in the same way that Sir John Barbirolli was years ago, when he made this same concerto with Artur Schnabel. Mozart's cadenzas are used. The recording is spacious and clean, with excellent balance between soloist and orchestra. —R.H.R.

NEW DIRECTIONS IN MUSIC AND SOUND, VOL. I: *Orchestral Variations on a Theme of Paganini* (Blacher), *Capriccio for Orchestra* (von Einem), *Finale from Symphony—1947* (Fortner), *Finale from Symphony for Strings* (Hartmann), and *Furioso for Orchestra* (Liebermann); the RIAS Symphony Orchestra conducted by Ferenc Fricsay, Decca LP DL-9769, \$3.98.

▲ DECCA is due thanks for this sampling of the contemporary German scene, although it is unfortunate that two of the works had to be emasculated. Of these, the Hartmann is available complete on an old Capitol disc and it may be that it will get refurbished and re-coupled one of these days like so many of the 10-inchers from the late forties. Blacher's piece is a knockout and a recording of it has been too long in coming. Von Einem's and Liebermann's, both familiar to New Yorkers, are sort of Morton Gouldish studies in sonority with a Central European accent. Wolfgang Fortner is the

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only composer represented whose music has not enjoyed any currency in this country; like most of his companions he writes in modified 12-tone style with a high intensity that tends to detract from his expressive content, which is also high. The middle-road Hartmann snippet doesn't have much of a chance under the circumstances, but its excellences will be manifest to the open-minded. This is a composer who deserves to be much better known. Excepting Fortner, all of the others have a couple of American conductors in their pocket already, and of the lot Blacher, at least, fully merits whatever attention he receives. Fricsay elicits crackerjack playing. The sound is good, but not what it should be. Noisy surfaces. —J.L.

RESPIGHI: *Feste Romane; Vetrare di Chiesa*; Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra conducted by Antal Dorati. Mercury MG-50046, \$4.98.

RESPIGHI: *Impressioni Brasiliane*; **GRANADOS:** *2 Spanish Dances (Oriental, Andaluza)*; Colonne Concerts Orchestra conducted by George Sebastian; **CHAVEZ:** *Toccata for Percussion*; Gotham Percussion Players conducted by Milton Forstat. Urania URLP-7144, \$5.95.

▲ THE Respighi enthusiast should have a field day with these releases. We have two firsts on LP: *Church Windows*, four symphonic impressions composed in 1926 based on scenes from various stained glass windows and *Brazilian Impressions*, a series of three tone pictures written in 1927 after an extensive tour of South America. It takes a Toscanini to infuse genuine vitality and emotion into these highly-colored, but essentially empty and bombastic scores. They make very effective show pieces for hi-fi equipment, but that is about all. When one compares, for instance, Toscanini's now-deleted version of *Roman Festivals* with the present reading, one can hear the difference between a competent and an inspired performance of what is essentially background music for the movies. *Church Windows*

is seldom performed, and it is easy to see why after listening to the present version. *Brazilian Impressions* is somewhat less pretentious, but it is also basically movie music. The performance by Sebastian does not entirely erase memories of the pre-war performance by Oswald Kabasta and the Munich Philharmonic Orchestra on deleted 78 rpm, HMV records.

The *Urania* record contains a vivid version of Carlos Chavez' *Toccata for Percussion*, which has been recorded several times recently. If anyone wants to break a lease, here is a good record to play at full volume late at night. The performance has been recorded in a most lifelike manner. As a filler, *Urania* has included two *Spanish Dances* of Granados in the orchestral setting of Lamote de Grignon.

—R.H.R.

WAGNER: *Preludes to Lohengrin* and *Die Meistersinger*; *Overture to Tannhäuser* and the *Liebestod* from *Tristan und Isolde*; the Bamberg Symphony conducted by Jascha Horenstein. Vox LP PL-9110, \$5.95.

WAGNER: *Prelude and Liebestod* from *Tristan und Isolde*, *Dawn* and *Siegfried's Rhine Journey* and *Siegfried's Funeral Music* from *Die Goetterdaemmerung*; *L'Orchestre de la Société des Concerts du Conservatoire de Paris* conducted by Carl Schuricht. London LP LL-1074, \$3.98.

▲BY all that is constant you would expect the French orchestra to come off a poor second best in this repertory. But Schuricht is so gifted a conductor that his Parisian charges might have been playing at Bayreuth for all the ears could tell—except, of course, for the inappropriate if wonderful sound of French brass. Horenstein's performances are quite acceptable, but with the price differential tipping the scale there is really not much to say in their defense. Not to mention the fact that Toscanini's surpassing Wagner is available at \$3.98, which really makes the whole discussion academic. Still, listen to Schuricht before you buy. —J.L.

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OVERTURES

AUBER: *Overtures—Masaniello, The Bronze Horse, Fra Diavolo and The Crown Diamonds; L'Orchestre de la Société des Concerts du Conservatoire de Paris* conducted by Albert Wolff. London LP LL-1157, \$3.98.

CHABRIER: *Phèdre Overture and Espana; L'Orchestre Symphonique de la Radiodiffusion Nationale Belge* conducted by Franz André. Telefunken LP TM-68016, \$2.98.

GLUCK: *Overture to Alceste; SCHUMANN:* *Manfred Overture, Op. 115; L'Orchestre de la Suisse Romande* conducted by Karl Muenchinger. London LP LD-9145, \$2.98.

HANDEL: *Overtures to Alcina and Berenice; the Boyd Neel Orchestra* conducted by Boyd Neel. London LP LD-9166, \$2.98.

OFFENBACH: *Overtures to Orpheus in Hades and La Belle Hélène; the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra* conducted by Alfred Wallenstein. Decca LP DL-4095, \$2.98.

ROSSINI: *Overtures to The Barber of Seville and Tancredi; L'Orchestre Symphonique de la Radiodiffusion Nationale Belge* conducted by Franz André. Telefunken LP TM-68024, \$2.98.

SCHUBERT: *Overtures to Rosamunde and The Magic Harp; the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra* conducted by Fritz Lehmann. Decca LP DL-4094, \$2.98.

SUPPE: *Overtures, Beautiful Galathea and Light Cavalry; L'Orchestre Symphonique de la Radiodiffusion Nationale Belge* conducted by Franz André. Telefunken LP TM-68018, \$2.98.

▲NONE of these discs should need extended comment, and the profusion of couplings perforce obviates comparison. To take them in order: Wolff's omnibus Auber program is a peach, stunningly played and recorded with the last measure of hi-fi; don't miss this one. André's Chabrier is not very exciting, but his *Phèdre* is wonderfully musical; the forth-

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coming bids fail in the Anserme are on old *Alceste* he or the count Neel rarely beautiful recommends the Offenbach spirits him kind were very satisfactory a *Tancredi* Telefunken of the ubiquitous performance sound is André's *Barber* in swing fairly let

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coming Westminster "Lab Series" *Espana* bids fair to top all of them sonically and in the meantime I prefer Beecham or Ansermet. Muenchinger's performances are on the heavy side; Furtwaengler's old *Alceste Overture* is my choice, and either he or Toscanini for the *Manfred* despite the coupling nuisance involved. Boyd Neel does handsomely with the two rarely heard Handel overtures; this is beautiful music and the disc is highly recommended. Wallenstein gallops through the Offenbachiana with engaging high spirits and the engineers have treated him kindly, but the surfaces on my copy were swishy. André's Rossini is quite satisfactory; it is especially good to have a *Tancredi Overture* but one wishes that Telefunken had paired it with another of the more rare overtures and not the ubiquitous *Barber*. The Lehmann performances are dull and the recorded sound is poor. The Suppé disc is a delight; André brings these old war horses to life in swaggering style and the performances fairly leap with realism.

—J.L.

CHAMBER MUSIC

BRAHMS: *Trio No. 2 in C, Op. 87;*

HAYDN: *Trio No. 1 in G, Op. 73,*

No. 2; the Trio de Trieste. London

LP LL-1176, \$3.98.

FRANCK: *Trio in F Sharp, Op. 1, No. 1;*

CHAUSSON: *Trio in G Minor, Op. 3;*

the Trio di Bolzano. Vox LP PL-8950,

\$5.95.

HAYDN: *Trios No. 29 in F, No. 30 in D*

and No. 31 in G; Robert Veyron-

Lacroix (piano), Jean-Pierre Rampal

(flute) and Jean Huchot (cello). Lon-

don/L'Oiseau-Lyre LP OL-50036, \$4.98.

▲THE Trio de Trieste is one of my favorite ensembles, and their performances here are just beautiful. Myself, I like a rather more rugged Brahms, but the Italianate approach has its redeeming lyrical attributes. The famous Haydn work has been played with more fitting style overall on a Westminster disc, but

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I am not so sure that the gypsy-like *Finale* isn't better entrusted to these South Europeans. The Franck and Chausson works are very early efforts, as the opus numbers indicate. Their musical interest, however, is far above the average level for the products of a composer's burgeoning years. Franck's style had not yet become so mystically muddy as it would be, and Chausson's miniaturistic distillate of Wagner is utterly charming. The Trio di Bolzano has a kind of roughness that does not ideally suit anything French, but there can be no serious cavil with their collaboration beyond considerations of style, and such matters are largely subjective. The flute trios are a dream of loveliness, with more rapid tempi than the Westminster group elected. The latter supplanted the flute with a violin, which is again a subjective matter. I prefer the flute. All three of these discs are excellently recorded, with the L'Oiseau-Lyre taking the honors for real chamber-music intimacy of sound

—J.L.

The Japanese Koto: Imperial Court Music—*Chi Dori* (Yoshizawa), *Yu-Gao* (Yaezake), and *Rokudan* (K-Yatsuhashi); *Dance Suite* and *Three Etudes* (Yuize); Shinichi Yuize (koto). Cook Laboratories LP 1132, \$5.95.

▲NOBODY who has seen one or another of the recent Japanese films will need any urging to sample this extraordinary recording. There is a haunting loveliness in the unique tinkle of the koto, which in this case is a six-foot instrument with thirteen silken strings of 130 tightly woven strands each. The usual tension adjustments are not employed; tuning is a matter of movable ivory bridges under the individual strings. Plucking is to the right of the bridges. By depressing any or all of the strings to the left an infinite variety of pitch is possible, especially because a change in the descending scale of the Japanese mode produces six different pitches. The five-tone Chinese mode is combined with the Japanese in Yuize's original works, which sound for all the world like an Oriental stylization of the

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Elizabethan style admixed with a gamelan suggestion. Enchanting, if totally formless. So, indeed, are the older works, which date from the 16th-18th centuries. All are programmatic, with frequent touches of primitive symbolism as in the simulation of an ominous wind. The more traditional court pieces enlist the soloist's voice; apparently this custom has long since given way to purely instrumental performance but Yuize sings the required narrative solos in moving and presumably quite authentic fashion. This is one of the enterprising Emory Cook's most exciting—and by all odds his most charming—experiment in exotic sound. Don't miss it.

—J.L.

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SCHUBERT: *Sonata in A Minor ("Arpeggione")*; **BOCCHERINI:** *Sonata No. 6 in A*; **SAMMARTINI:** *Sonata in G*; Leonard Rose (cello) and Leonid Hambro (piano). Columbia LP ML-4984, \$3.98.

▲ROSE is unquestionably the most gifted of native American cellists. For sheer tonal opulence it would not be easy to find anything to surpass this omnibus recital, not to speak of the artist's stylistic feel and faultless intonation. Excepting the ever lovely *Arpeggione*, however, this is a rather character-less brace of vehicles. The Boccherini lacks a memorable profile, and the Sammartini has no divine spark despite a thoroughgoing craftsmanship. Neither of these composers has been otherwise represented with cello sonatas on LP, as it happens, so perhaps it was sensible for Columbia to have issued this odd coupling. Prospective customers undoubtedly number more cellists than not, and they can be expected to want the disc for its superb performances quite aside from and compelling musical interest. There is another delicious version of the *Arpeggione* by Gendron, by the way, and that excellent London recording more happily includes the *Op. 73 Fantasiestuecke* and the *Op. 93 Romances* of Schumann.

—J.L.

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SHOSTAKOVICH: *Quartet No. 4, Op. 83*; *Quartet No. 5, Op. 92*; respectively the Tchaikovsky Quartet and the

Beethoven Quartet. Vanguard LP VRS-6021, \$4.98.

▲THE "new" Shostakovich is a far cry from the slyly satiric tunesmith of old. These are intense, grimly serious works, with precious little respite from a feeling of imminent tragedy. The annotator, Sidney Finkelstein, is at pains to justify their musico-dialectical efficacy in terms of a humanist esthetic, but it is not so easy to go along with his guarded implication that the composer's development has tended away from the abstract. I would not concur that this is "strongly melodic" music, either, unless of course the writer equates "strong" with "bitter." It would be fascinating to know what the Soviet critics had to say about such obvious infractions of the Marxist imperative as to artistic accessibility. There is a deep-running stream of self-consciousness in both of these highly personal, troubled, and uncompromising essays. On short acquaintance I find them sincerely affecting, and entirely worthy of a master whose previous experiments in the quartet form had not prepared us for anything of this quality. The performances are compelling, if not particularly smooth; the sound and the surfaces are better than you would expect from a Moscow tape.

—J.L.

KEYBOARD

DEBUSSY: *Piano Music*; Columbia LP set (3 discs) SL-222, \$14.95. Each disc available separately — \$5.95. *Preludes (Book I)*; Robert Casadesus (piano); *Six Epigraphes Antiques*; *En Blanc et Noir*; Robert and Gaby Casadesus (duo-pianists); Columbia ML-4977. *Preludes (Book II)*; *Deux Arabesques*; *Children's Corner Suite*; Robert Casadesus (piano); Columbia ML-4978. *Images (Books I and II)*; *Espannes*; *Masques*; *L'ile Joyeuse*; Robert Casadesus (piano); Columbia ML-4979.

▲THIS rich set of Debussy treasures is Columbia's way of celebrating Robert Casadesus' 20th concert season in America. It is an apt tribute, for Casadesus has long been identified with this wondrous section of standard keyboard repertory

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He is, of course, able to give a deal of pleasure with his playing of it. His technique and musical taste are impeccable; and he makes music. Casadesus does not, however, bring to Debussy that special tonal and rhythmic magic that makes Walter Gieseking, in my estimation, exceptionally persuasive in this music. Regardless, here is more than acceptable Debussy by anyone's standards and in a few decades we may wish we had someone as talented and masterful as Casadesus to play this music for us. Columbia has given Casadesus brilliant engineering support. All the recordings are new, except for the *Preludes (Book II)* and the *Children's Corner Suite*. Oddly enough, these (along with a really magnificent performance of *L'Ile Joyeuse* that will take second place to none) are the best of Casadesus' work. Particularly enjoyable, too, are the four-hand *Epigraphes* and the two-piano *En Blanc et Noir* in which Gaby Casadesus proves herself again a superb ensemble player.

—C.J.L.

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KABALEVSKY: *Sonata No. 2, Op. 45; 3 Preludes, Op. 38, Nos. 13, 8, 6; Sonata No. 1, Op. 13;* Jeannette Haien (piano). WCFM LP disc 18, \$5.95.

▲ ALL responsible artists are interested in performing new music. Everyone likes an abundance of melody and something that sounds well, that is grateful for the prescribed instrumentation. The diverse works of Kabelevsky listed above meet these qualifications, so pianists play them. The melodies may be trite and banal, and they may not be well developed or integrated into a pleasing form—no matter; the music is new, sounds well, has melodies. Hence, this well recorded disc, played cleanly but without the force of a significant performing personality, is recommended.

—C.J.L.

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SCHUBERT: *Sonata in A minor, Op. 42;* Webster Aitken (piano). EMS LP disc No. 107, \$5.95.

▲ IN the past couple of years, something has happened to Aitken's feelings about the Schubert sonatas. He used to play

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all of them very well indeed; now, I think, he plays few of them well. To be sure, he still has a remarkable command over the tonal resources of his instrument; he pedals superbly and there is a certain refinement even about his new musical excesses. These excesses, however, make this wonderful sonata seem nervous and halting in its expression. Aitken has robbed the music of its ease and flow and has apparently lost the ability to build up gradual, cumulative tension. This is a pity, for we now have one less pianist to turn to when we wish to hear the great Schubert piano literature. Regarding the music in question, I must suggest the beautifully recorded Kempff performance on a London LP. —C.J.L.

VOICE

CANTELOUBE: *Chants de France—La Belle est au Jardin d'amour* (Picardy); *Quon you m'ere pitchounce* (Rouergue-Spinning song); *Y a rien de si charmant* (Savoy); *La fermo d'un pauvre omé* (Languedec); *Ma douce Amie* (Brittany); *Petite Claudinette* (Savoy); *Au Berdure* (Bearn); *De bon matin je me suis levé* (Auvergne); *Som-som* (Languedoc-Lullaby); *L'Hiver sera bientôt passé* (Dauphiny); *O ciucciarella!* (Corsica-Lullaby); *Sé lo voy* (Haut-Quercy); *Bon mati me llevi* (Rousillon); *Sur la montagne* (Gascony); Lucie Daullare (soprano) and Joseph Cante Louise (piano). Oiseau-Lyre OL 50047, \$5.95.

▲ **CANTELOUBE**, whose fascinatingly atmospheric *Chants d'Auvergne* made phonographic history in the early thirties, reveals his attitude toward folk song arranging in the notes accompanying this record: "When a composer raises them to the level of art," he says, "they retain all their youth." And this he has done. His piano parts are elaborate and far removed from the style of self-accompanied folk-singers we have come to know so well. Each is carefully worked out with as much craft as an art song. Miss Daullene's voice is thin and girlish, a little too much so to carry a whole pre-

gram. But there are moments of quite lovely lyricism in her singing, and without exception the songs are attractive.

—P.L.M.

Choral Music of the 13th to 16th Centuries:

Ave de Coelis; Hodie Christus (Motets); Magnificat on the Fourth Tone; Improperia et Hymnus from The Mass for Good Friday (Palestrina); De la crudel morte; Dimmi dolce Maria; Giu per la mala vite (Laudi); O vos omnes; Tenebrae factae sunt (Responses) (Victoria); Quartetto Polifonico. London LL-995, \$3.98.

▲ MOST of the works on this disc have been transcribed for the quartet of two tenors, baritone and bass which, in most cases, means that it has been transposed down a key or two. While the disc offers some lovely singing of its kind and the dignity and devotional nature of these works are confirmed by the singers, the Palestrina and Victoria works—intended for choirs—lose much of their original character. The *Laudi* or *Laudi Spirituali*, as the annotator tells us, were early hymns which were originally for monodic singing but later harmonized for four-part singing. To our ears, they sound more natural, but I read in *The Gramophone* (January issue) that the arrangements used here are dressed up considerably. Be that as it may, they are quite effective even though they do not sound like hymns that a wandering fraternity of flagellants might have sung in the 13th century. As I said previously, there is some lovely singing in this program, and I have no doubt that many listeners will find it enjoyable. The recording, which has a spaciousness in sound, is most effective. —J.N.

DEBUSSY: *Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien;* Suzanne Danco (soprano), Nancy Waugh (contralto), Lise de Gontmollin (contralto), Union Chorale de la Tour-de-Peilz and Suisse Romande Orchestra, conducted by Ernest Ansermet. London LL 1061, \$3.98.

▲ THE *Martyrdom of Saint Sébastien*, described as a modern mystery, composed

for the dancer Ida Rubinstein by d'Annunzio and Debussy, dates from 1911. The music is therefore mature and characteristic of the composer, full to the brim with harmonic and coloristic subtleties, yet somehow not quite an authentic masterpiece. For many years all we had a chance to hear of the score was a set of "symphonic fragments," but now the work achieves its second virtually complete recording. The first was hailed as something of a triumph when it was new in 1951, as it introduced the Oklahoma City Symphony Orchestra and Chorus in a most promising debut. But though all connected with the earlier venture (Allegro ALG 3004) acquitted themselves with honor, this new one effectively supersedes the old. Ansermet, of course, is noted for his understanding of such music as this, and he has excellent forces with which to work. Danco does especially distinguished singing, and the choral singing is admirable. There are a few minor cuts in the score. The record surfaces on the review copy are less than silent.

—P.L.M.

DEBUSSY: *Le Promenoir des Deux Amants; Fêtes Galantes, Ser. 1—En Sourde; Fantoches; Trois Chansons de Bilitis; Irma Kolassi (mezzo-soprano), and André Collard, (piano).* London LD 9176, ten-inch, \$2.98.

▲ KOLASSI'S pleasant, well-controlled voice is an excellent vehicle for this program. Perhaps all the singer needs is a further touch of intimacy, a little more directness of communication, to take her place among the great. But no one since Maggie Teyte has matched the restrained freedom with which she sang, for example, the *Bilitis* cycle. —P.L.M.

SONGS OF THE HEBRIDES: *The Cockle Gatherer; An Erisky Love Lilt; The Dowerless Maiden; Dance to your Shadow; A Fairy's Love Song; Water Kelpie's Song; The Fairy Loom; A Wandering Shade; Milking Croon; Milk-Song; The Mull Fisher's Song; The Islay Reaper; The Land of Heart's Desire; The Skua-Gulls; An Erisky*

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Lullaby; The Coolin of Rum; To People who have Gardens; The Sea Gull of Land under Wave; Caristone; An Island Sheiling Song; To the Cradle Lord of the Isles; The Old Crone's Lilt; The Bens of Jura; Kishmu's Galley; Mary MaKower (contralto) and Franz Jelinek (harp). SPA 65, \$5.95.

▲WHAT the world in general knows about the folk music of the Hebrides is based squarely on the researches and the published arrangements of Marjorie Kennedy-Fraser (1857-1930), a Marchesi pupil inspired in this work by Cecil Sharp. The attractive-voiced singer of this selection and her assisting harpist have availed themselves of the Kennedy-Fraser versions and the translations of Kenneth Macleod which were published with them. The program is, therefore, somewhat "concertized." The songs themselves, as everyone must know, are hauntingly melodious, and the arrangements preserve the atmosphere of the Islands if not their original primitive style. The one danger of playing the whole program through at a sitting is that the tasteful and pleasing performances may become monotonous. —P.L.M.

HINDEMITH: *Geistliche Motetten—Cum natus esset; Pastores loquebantur; Nuptiae factae sunt;* **MOZART:** *Il Re Pastore—Overture; L'amerò, sarò costante; Non temer, amato bene, K.490;* Irmgard Seefried (soprano) with Erika Werba (piano), Wolfgang Schneiderhan (violin) and Vienna Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Ferdinand Leitner. Decca DL 9768, \$3.98.

▲THOUGH the accompanying notes tell us that the *Motets* were composed for soprano with orchestra, Miss Seefried, who has made something of a specialty of them, uses the piano. This is not easy music to sing, but the artist is, mistress of the situation; one feels that it is vocally effective as well as expressive of the mysteries described in the texts. The Mozart numbers are no less admirable. After a spirited performance of the *Re Pastore* overture, the singer gives a June, 1955

fine extrovert account of the famous air from this opera. I do not recall any other recording in which the voice and violin seem so definitely to be performing a duet; both are close to the microphone, yet this seems to accord well with the singer's ecstatic conception of the lovely piece. The usual long *cadenza* is replaced by a short one, and the aria ends simply. The concert aria which concludes the program is done without recitative. There is not a great deal of tonal variety in this performance, but the singer's tone is as always beautiful. If she has a fault it is in her not too strong diction. The recording is on the whole excellent, though I noted some fuzziness on the Hindemith side. —P.L.M.

ITALIAN AIRS: *Un certo non so che* (Vivaldi); *Come raggio di sol* (Caldara); *Ogni pena più spietata* (Pergolesi); *La Passione VII, IV, II; Plaisir d'amour* (Martini); *Già il sole del Gange* (Scarlatti); *Caro Loaccio, dolce nodo* (Gasparini); *Sen core l'Agnelletta* (Sarri); *Deh, più a me non v'asconde* (Bonincini); *Piangete, ohimè, piangete* (Carissimi); *Danza, danza* (Durante); Magda Laszlo (soprano) and Franz Holetschek, piano. Westminster WL 5375, \$5.95.

▲MISS LASZLO is in particularly good voice in this fine program; she and Mr. Holetschek are recorded in admirable balance. The recital is nicely varied, with some of the best known Italian classics and others little sung in our time. Of special interest are three arrangements of old *Laude*, here attributed to Pergolesi. Two of them will be remembered from Gabriella Gatti's Gramophone Shop set. Laszlo, as it happens, outdoes her predecessor in the beauty of her singing. She brings us *Come raggio di sol* in a more reserved and hushed manner than most, with the climax kept in bounds, and her way with *Ogni pena* is lighter and quicker than de Luca's (Decca 7505). *Plaisir d'amour* is sung in French, despite its Italian listing, and it is the least happy of the songs, as the singer seems less at home in the language. The rest are all

effective, though I miss the directness of Dancò in the lovely Bononcini piece.

—P.L.M.

MOZART: *Vu dal furor portata*, K. 21; *Si mostra la sorte*, K. 209; *Con ossequio, con rispetto*, K. 210; *Per pietà, non recercate*, K. 420; *Se al labbro mio non credi*, K. 295; *Miserol' O sognol*, K. 431; Waldemar Kmentt (tenor) with Vienna Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Bernhard Paumgartner. Epic LC-3076, \$3.98.

▲AS the Koechel numbers indicate, these arias range pretty well over Mozart's active musical life—the first of them was written when he was but nine! While perhaps there is nothing here comparable to the best of the soprano concert arias, the pieces are all typical and splendidly musical. Kmentt sings them in a good solid voice (perhaps its very solidity making the florid passages something of a task, particularly in the first aria) not notable for tenderness or flexibility. Stylistically the performances are satisfactory, and they are spaciously recorded.

—P.L.M.

MUSSORGSKY: *Songs and Dances of Death*—*Trepak*; Boris Gmirtya (baritone); *Serenade*; *The Revel*; *The Goat*; *Kalisirat*; Alexander Pirogov (baritone); *Song of the Flea*; Mark Reizen (basso); **RACHMANINOV:** *The Soldier's Bride*; *I Thou My Beloved Harvest Field*; *Like a Vision the Daydreams Have Vanished* (unpublished); Nadezhda Oboukhova (mezzo-soprano); *Spring Waters*; *I Was at Her House*; *The Pied Piper*; Serge Lameshev (tenor); *O Cease Thy Singing, Maiden Fair*; *Dear One, Do not Leave*; Boris Gmirtya (baritone). Vanguard VRS-6023, \$4.98.

▲ALL things considered, I have not heard many Soviet recordings comparable in quality to this one. The program is valuable in itself, including some important little-known songs, well balanced with the familiar. It is interesting to hear two of the *Songs and Dances of Death*

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from artists to the language and the manner born; of the four other Mussorgsky numbers, only the *Song of the Flea* places among the warhorses. On the Rachmaninov side we have one totally unknown waltz song, and at least one other—I Was at Her House—that seems not to have been recorded before. The singers are all more than competent. Outstanding to me is the genuine Russian mezzo voice of the veteran Oboukhova, though Gmirtya is hardly less impressive. The familiar *O Cease Thy Singing*, to be sure, has been transposed to a very low key for the baritone, but his singing of this and the other songs has the element of drama. Lemeshev is in excellent voice, his tone ringing out clear and true, but I felt *Spring Waters* (or, if you will, *Floods of Spring*) sounded a little slow and careful. Pirogov is on the gruff side, as we remember from his *Boris*, but he too knows how to make his songs come to life. Reizen does the expected and the effective with the *Flea*.

—P.L.M.

ROSA PONSELLE SINGS TODAY:

Amadis—Bois épais (Lully); *Rosemonde* (Perisco); *Guitares et Mandolines* (Saint-Saens); *Le temps des lilas* (Chausson); *Von ewiger Liebe* (Brahms); *Mir tracumte von einem Koenigskind* (Trunk); *Der Erikoenig* (Schubert); *In questa 'ombra oscura* (Beethoven); *Rispetto* (Woli-Ferrari); *O del mio amato ben* (Donaudy); *Aprile* (Tosti); *Amuri, amuri* (Rosa Ponselle at the piano); *I battitori de grano* (Sadero); *Drink to me only with thine eyes* (Old English); *The Night Wind* (Farley); *Homing* (Del Riego); Rosa Ponselle (soprano) and Igor Chicagov (piano). RCA Victor LM 1889, \$3.98.

▲RUMORS that Rosa Ponselle has been recording again have finally become a reality. It may as well be stated at once that her voice is still one of the most beautiful extant making up in depth what it has lost in the old soaring quality. Her varied program is not unnaturally a somewhat uneven accomplishment. *O del mio amato ben* has rarely been so exquisitely sung, and there is an indescribably eerie

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quality in her *In questa tomba. Amuri*, *amuri* (or *The Sicilian Car-Driver's Song*) is a *tour de force*, and she gets a note of ecstasy into *Aprile* (one of Testi's best). Understandably, she is most at home in the Italian repertoire. As a *Lieder* singer she is less successful, and her French singing leaves something to be desired, both stylistically and linguistically, though its overall effect is not unattractive. The English songs are all in the nature of encores. For the best that is in it, this record will be treasured. A large public has been waiting for it. —P.L.M.

RAVEL: *Shéhérazade; Deux Mélodies hébraïques; Trois Poèmes de Stéphane Mallarme*; Suzanne Danco (soprano) with Suisse Romande Orchestra, conducted by Ernest Ansermet. London LL 1196, \$3.98.

▲ONE of the first Suzanne Danco 78 rpm recordings to reach this country was her collaboration with Ansermet in *Shéhérazade*, and she has done nothing finer in the ensuing years. I am not the only critic who has often wished for this performance on LP, and now our patience has been rewarded. The singer has lost nothing of the vocal purity or the dreamy delivery of her earlier effort, and Ansermet brings out the wonderful atmospheric detail in the orchestration. Only the balance leaves something to be desired—it is really considerably too much in favor of the voice. Never does one of those sweeping orchestral climaxes carry the singer on the crest of its wave—her feet, plainly, are always securely on the ground. The first of the Mallarmé songs seems to me metronomic on the singer's part, but the others are given in excellent style. In the Hebrew songs she uses the French text. The *Kaddish* has considerable eloquence; *L'Enigme éternel*, which I have usually heard with piano, seems quite changed in its orchestral dress, and in this performance quite straightforward.

—P.L.M.

SCHUETZ: *Weihnachts-Historie*; Gunt-hild Weber (soprano), Herbert Hess (tenor), Paul Gummer (basso), Hans

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Drewanz (harpsichord), Klaus Storc' (cello), Kantorei der Dreikönigskirche, Frankfurt, and Orchestra of the *Collegium Musicum*, conducted by Kurt Thomas. Oiseau-Lyre OL 50020. \$4.98.

▲COUNTING the rather strange Italian version (Colosseum 1034), we now have three recordings of this little masterpiece. To all intents and purposes, however, it will suffice to compare this *Christmas Story* with the performance of the Cantata Singers under Arthur Mendel. It is immediately apparent that Thomas has not used Mendel's edition of the score, that he favors the harpsichord rather than the organ and modern flutes in place of the two recorders that make such an effect in the earlier recording. Being more recent, it is not surprising that the reproduction from Frankfurt is a little more realistic than that made in New York. But perhaps because of Mendel's long and intimate study of the score (which he was preparing for Schirmer's publication at the time of his three public performances and the recording) he shows an insight that is not apparent in Thomas' record. Most strikingly this is felt in the rounded phrasing of Mendel as opposed to the square-cut beat of Thomas. By a coincidence both tenor-Evangelists are named Hess, but whereas the German Herbert cuts all his recitative to measure, the American William sings on the words with the effect of direct but heightened speech, quite obviously the effect Schuetz wanted, as explained in a quotation from the composer in the preface to Mendel's score. And the American Angel, Charlotte Bloecher, sings with a clear bright tone that Miss Weber does not match. The veteran Paul Gummer is a rather benign Herod, but a musical one, if no more so than the richer voiced Paul Matthen. —P.L.M.

SPANISH SONGS: *7 Canciones populares Espanolas* (Falla); *Cambal del somni—Damunt de tu nomes les flores*; *Aquesta nit un maleix vent; Jo et presencia com la mar* (Mompou); *Romance*

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de Solita (Pittaluga); *Canciones negras—Cancion de Cuna para dormir a un Negrito; Canto netro* (Montsalvatge); *Farruca; La Giralda* (Turina); *Canzion porque passais; El Majo Celoso; Con amores la mi madre; Dos cantares populares; El Vito* (Obradors); Nan Merriman (mezzo-soprano) and Gerald Moore (piano). Angel 35028, \$4.98.

▲THE peculiarly hard, gem-like quality of Merriman's voice, its rapid vibrato and her obviously not very reticent temperament seem to fit her especially well for such a program as this. I suspect her occasionally of being more Spanish than the Iberians themselves, like so many of the foreign composers who have written in the Spanish idiom. Still, with all the energy she has put into these songs, they somehow seem to want a touch of conviction.

—P.L.M.

WOLF: *Michelangelo Lieder; Der Freund; Der Musikant; Verschwiegene Liebe; Gesang Weylas; Storchenbotschaft;* Heinz Rehfuss (baritone) and Hans Willi Haeusslein (piano). London LD 9182, 10-inch, \$2.98.

▲REHFUSS' voice is of pleasant quality, always bright and forward, his singing style straight and to the point. This is a perfectly admirable approach to several of these songs—*Der Freund, Der Musikant, Gesang Weylas, Storchenbotschaft*—but it is not in the best interests of the Michelangelo cycle or of *Verschwiegene Liebe*. Everything moves forward strictly on schedule, with no time wasted pointing up details, which is not as it should be, for these are introspective songs. —P.L.M.

POPS SPOTLIGHT

WORDS without music are plentiful on this month's releases. Riverside has come up with *Here's Morgan*, which is a group of Henry's famous satires (RLP-8003); there being no sponsor to worry about, Morgan's wit seems to have lost something of its spontaneity in this recording experiment, but he is funnier than most comedians even at that. Columbia has issued another sampling of Victor Borge's inimitably zany antics (CL-646); it's called *Caught in the Act*, which is a fact

because the mike was turned on at live performances. This man is a genius. I suppose Alistair Cooke is too, in his way. The same firm has brought out *An Evening with same* (ML-4970), which seems to have a certain charm notwithstanding the most execrable singing, whistling and piano-playing I have encountered in ages. The millions who like to see and hear him on TV, however, will find it all delightful.

POETRY is beginning to make its inevitable encroachment on the lists of the big labels, some of the small ones having shown that it is highly saleable. RCA Victor has a threesome generally entitled *Poet's Gold* (LM-1812, LM-1813 and LM-1883). The first two, handled by Raymond Massey, Helen Hayes and Thomas Mitchell, cover a good slice of the poetic standard repertory—*The Raven, The Battle Hymn of the Republic, Ode on a Grecian Urn, The Children's Hour, Rime of the Ancient Mariner, Paul Revere's Ride*, etc. The third concerns itself with verses of today—readings from Eliot, Jeffers, Nash, Masters, MacLeish and the like by Geraldine Brooks and Norman Rose. All very pleasant listening. None of these can hold a candle, however, to the new Collector's Records disc (LP-105) on which an actress identified only as "Cherise" recites, against a Melachrino background, the *Three Oboli to Aphrodite* by Pierre Louys. In the annotations the poem is described as "the story of an unorthodox girl in ancient Greece," but that hardly does justice to it. A daring enterprise, this, and rather handsomely executed. Miss "Cherise" has the most sensual voice in the entire microgroove catalogue, and her material is up to it.

THEATER is represented by Marivaux's *Les Fausses Confidences* (London International TW-91042/3), with Jean-Louis Barrault and Madeleine Renaud in the leading roles. The play dates from the 1730s, but it might have been written this past season, so near is the plot to modern sensibilities. The acting—all in French, of course—is by and large convincing. One sometimes gets the feeling that the cast is overdoing a bit, perhaps because this is a studio performance and because the audience is not only unseen but known to be foreign. However, that is a small enough price to pay for such delicious dialogue. Other entries in the footlight department this time are the haunting incidental music from *The Flowering Peach* with the composer, Alan Hovhaness, conducting an unidentified ensemble (MGM E-3164); Morton Gould conducting his own orchestra in sprightly suites from *Oklahoma* and *Carousel* (RCA Victor LM-1884); and a re-release on Telefunken (LGM-65028) of the old abridged *Dreigroschenoper* of Kurt Weill. The last does not compare to Capitol's more modern version, but it has the sentimental advantage of possessing not only Lotte Lenja but all the rest of the original 1928 cast.

VOCALS: Anna Maria Alberghetti offers a fetching miscellany of semi-folk stuff on Mercury MG-20056; such things as *Giannina Mia* and *Estrellita* she can sing as well as anybody. On the

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same label. The Gaylords *Sing by Request*; MG-25198 includes *Frisette* and *Serenade in the Night* and very pretty they are, too. Frank Sinatra, the incomparable, is back on Capitol W-581, which is called *The Wee Small Hours*, with such as *I See Your Face Before Me* and *Dancing on the Ceiling*. A newcomer named Matt Dennis sings and plays a brace of Rodgers & Hart tunes in an RCA Victor collection entitled, for no discernible reason, *She Dances Overhead*; this guy's voice has a nice personality and he will go a long way if he looks as well as he sounds. I can't say quite as much for Sammy Davis, Jr., who seems to have oodles of personality but not too much voice; Decca has arranged a studio recital for him on DL-8118, and only in the songs he can let go with, like *Lonesome Road* and *Stand Up and Fight*, does he really come through shouting. In the shouting department there is quite a bit of absolutely first class belting-out on Cook LP-1183, which features Lizzy Miles in *Hot Song My Mother Taught Me*, including such classics as *Mama Don' Allow It* and *Ballin' the Jack*. Also, at another extreme, on Columbia CL-644, which is Mahalia Jackson's long-awaited collection of gospel songs. Outside of grand opera I don't know any ladies who make so much beautiful noise as these two. Both discs are unhesitatingly recommended.

ELEKTRA is a small firm with high standard, and one of their recent best (EKL-22) is *Courting Songs*, sung by Jean Ritchie and Oscar Brand. Miss Ritchie is of course nationally known, in fact internationally known, but Brand's name is not especially familiar outside New York and perhaps this disc will help to rectify that situation. For he has a wonderful way with this kind of material and there is no reason why his fame shouldn't spread far indeed. Another disc that inadvertently spotlights the secondary artist is Vanguard VRS-7022, on which Brother John Sellers sings *Jack of Diamonds* and other such to the accompaniment of harmonica player Sonny Terry. Sellers is more than adequate, but Terry clean steals the show. Also on Vanguard (VRS-8011) is a recital of blues by Jimmy Rushing, who used to be the vocal anchor for Count Basie. There is nobody who can steal a scene from Rushing, and one only regrets that he didn't choose to include here his classic version of *I'm Gonna Move to the Outskirts of Town*; nothing he ever did quite equals it.

CHANTEUSES forward, most scrumptiously Annie Cordy, who offers a collection entitled *Bonbons, Caramels* on Angel LP-64010. We have discussed this young lady before; it's nice to have another record from her so soon. America's best competition, namely Billie Holiday and Sarah Vaughan, are heard to considerable advantage on Clef MG-C-169 and Riverside RLP-2511 respectively. Billie's *Strange Fruit* and *Travelin' Light* are exquisite; Sarah is backed by John Kirby and his orchestra on re-issues of such oldies as *The Peanut Vendor* and *You Go to My Head* (originally recorded for the now defunct Crown label) and all of them are distinguished for their cleancut proph-

ecy of the success that would be hers in a later day. Which reminds me that I predict a future myself for a young lady named Kitty White, who is heard on a Pacifica disc (PL-802) singing an assortment that ranges from *Autumn Leaves* to *Black Is the Color*; her delectable accompaniments are by a young harpist with the unlikely monicker of Corky Hale. The recording was made in the latter's apartment. According to the program notes the session was unrehearsed. If this be true the participants merit some kind of prize for their wonderful music-making, few song programs are so sensitively, compellingly accomplished.

PIANISTS: I liked all of these—Teddy Wilson, on Norgram MG-N-1019, in *Blues for the Oldest Profession*, *Moonlight on the Ganges* and other redoubtables, Jelly Roll Morton, on Riverside RLPs 1038 and '41, in *Shreveport Stomp*, *Wolverine Blues* and 14 other grand old numbers, Art Tatum, on Clef MG-C-657/61, in a whole batch of standards like *September Song*, *Stardust*, *Blue Skies* and *Tea for Two*, and Oscar Peterson, on the same label's MG-C-648/50, in samplings from the respective genius of Harry Warren (*Nagasaki*), Harold Arlen (*Stormy Weather*), and Jimmy McHugh (*Sunny Side of the Street*). All of these boys are great artists in their several fashions and we are indebted to their sponsors for these recordings, many of which will be classics in the years to come.

YESTERDAY: Here's a bunch of re-issues that will surely bring a nostalgic tear—Columbia has brought out (CL-639) the Town Hall concert given by Charlie Barnet back in 1947; real sharp band he had in those days, which were just about its last as a major factor in the business. I doubt that any other aggregation has given us such a terrific *Cherokee*. Do you remember the California Ramblers? Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey are heard with them on a Riverside disc (RLP-1051) that includes *Third Rail* and *When Erastus Plays His Old Kazoo*; brother, this is the best cornball stuff in months. RCA Victor comes up with a collection by Bob Zurke and his Delta Rhythm Band (LJM-1013) called *Tom Cat on the Keys*; the disc naturally includes *Cow Cow Blues* and *Rhum-Boogie* as well. Clef has dug into its Charlie Parker files to reconstitute, on MG-C-646, the likes of *Swedish Schnaps* and *Lover Man*, which were among the late master's finest. And Columbia, speaking of departed greats, has got around to Charlie Christian, who was Goodman's guitarist in the pre-Pearl Harbor heyday of swing. CL-652 assembles *Seven Come Eleven* and *Six Appeal*—two of the Goodman Quintet's most memorable pressings, and where else could you find a combo that included not only Goodman and Christian, but Lionel Hampton, Fletcher Henderson and Nick Fatool?

POST SCRIPT: I cannot depart this month without awarding Mercury a prize for having arrived at the ultimate in album titles. On MG-20054 Ralph Marterie and his orchestra do a nice job on such standards as *Can't We Talk It Over?* and *Two Sleepy People*. Their work is billed, big as life, as *Music for Smoochin'*...I suppose it had to happen sooner or later.

—JAS

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